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The Educator's Conscience

Manfred Stanley



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In the *New York Times* of May 1, 1977, the following quotation appears. The author is a former teacher at Yale and Fordham and has a Ph.D. in Russian history and literature. He is now an executive in a management consulting firm and, in this passage, is discussing how professors are being retrained for executive positions.

I think teaching is in many ways like selling. A good teacher...can communicate enthusiasm and interest in the subject and...sell the students by relating it to their special needs. And that is basically what we do when we sell a product.

Another executive, formerly a Ph.D. in English literature and specialist in medieval drama, tells us in this same article that

it doesn't matter whether I'm analyzing a literary problem [in Chaucer] or a marketing problem in Maidenform. The principles are the same.

Irony flows easily in response to such justifications for abandoning the office of educator for the life of a huckster. It is rather more difficult to translate into some theoretical rigor one's feeling that persuasion in education differs somehow from persuasion in the selling of brassieres. The contrast seems to speak for itself; but is it only the vocational snob who hears?

This essay begins with an effort to explore the modern educator's conscience partially through my own experience with it. Although materials from literature, philosophy, and the Bible are present, the work is not a contribution to exegesis, literary criticism, or formal philosophical analysis. It is a meditation on how educational pedagogy differs from selling a commercial product. Reflected here are a method for analyzing experience, a philosophy of education, a conception of the limits of technology, and a view of some connections between theory and narrative. In brief, I address three questions: Is there some essential way the world appears to the educated consciousness? Is the educated consciousness of any public benefit in a modern democracy? What is the significance of these questions and their answers for education policy?

We must first ask whether there is a conscience unique to a calling, a conscience more than that of the good man in general. Can one be a good man and fail at one's calling as educator, as healer, as statesman? Such questions vex us. Aristotle wondered if the excellence of the good citizen was the same as that of the morally virtuous man. He felt they were different. But the issue seemed to give him pause—as it should, for our sense of the unity of soul is at stake. Yet those former educators quoted in my opening paragraph are surely not evil. There is, however, a failed conscience in their utterance. Or is conscience of calling irrelevant now? Where does one even begin with this tortured and trivialized and propagandized question?

There are good reasons for assuming the irrelevance of conscience today. Its authority has undergone some major humiliations in recent centuries. Four humiliations in particular come to mind: the *Copernican*, in which the earth as human world is cast out of the center of the cosmos; the *Darwinian*, in which the human world is degraded to a stage in the evolution of the animal; the *sociological*, in which conscience loses its mythical dimensions and is regarded as a mere byproduct of social order; and the *Freudian*, in which so much of ordinary desire is unmasked as secret agent of the hidden beast in human form.

At least a renovation of the concept of conscience is in order. We must consider whether conscience is a censor of desire, a natural enemy of gratification; whether it belongs to what Nietzsche condemned as the history of slave morality; whether it is present always to convict us of sin; whether it can create values rather than merely imitate them. In the face of these possibilities, some make a fetish out of dramas of conscience. As Edward Engleberg has said, "To cling to irrational and indefensible ideals not for the sake of the ideals but for the sake of the clinging has always been a presentiment of a declining age."¹

I shall assume that secular modernists can speak of conscience, though with difficulty and preferably without connotations of repressive austerity and fetishistic self-sacrifice. Conscience is experienced as an internal tribunal; but it needs as a guide a moral jurisprudence of practice, not a straitjacket of guilt. Conscience is a form of consciousness; but it should be taken as the contradictions and dialectics of means and ends, not as formulas of moral engineering.

What are the everyday experiences that stimulate the trials of conscience in the university at the present time? Almost everywhere in America, university faculty manuals state the criteria for promotion and tenure to be publications, teaching, and service. Conscience tells us that to *publish* our research is to undermine the seductions of ignorance; to bring under the disciplines of truth seeking the diverse structures of the world in which we live. To *teach* is to expose the young to tradition and continuities. With regard to *service*, three metaphors bear most upon the activities of educators: medicine, prophecy, and citizenship. The notion that philosophy relates to society with something of the significance of medicine is as old as Plato. The expectation that the educated mind should be fit to diagnose, criticize, and prescribe for the human condition lends to education something of the authority of prophecy. The exercise of skills necessary

1. Edward Engleberg, *The Unknown Distance: From Consciousness to Conscience, Goethe to Camus* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 247.

to manage a spiritually significant institution comprised of moral peers requires the wisdom appropriate to the classical vision of citizenship. In short, through study, writing, and speech, educators are expected to challenge the young with preexisting traditions of identity; to give form to the inchoate desires of consciousness; and to civilize through example the standards of judgment that make up the forms of conscience. These expectations can be and are compromised by us all every day.

It should be noted, however, that these compromises are contingent on the external conditions of contemporary educational practice. They do not arise from the essence of the educator's activity. Thus, in this everyday sense, "bad conscience" to an educator seems proportionate to the degree to which he is not allowed to act out the facets of his calling. There are many external conditions that call forth such compromises today. In the path of those who would publish on significant matters, there are the corrupting impediments of unending careerism, irrational specialization, and the commodity fetishism that besets the publishing industry. Teachers must contend with the consumerism of students, the specious egalitarianism of ideologues, and the illiteracy generated by public schools that have lost all pride of excellence. Intelligent teachers are enticed by the wealth of society into the status of technocratic conjurers reciting incantations of premature or inappropriate expertise.

Yet these corruptions can be corrected. They are not the necessary ground of the educator's crisis of doubt. Nor can they explain the definitive corruption of calling that characterizes the justifications of career change in the quotations that open this paper. It is not consumerism, egalitarianism, capitalism, specialization, illiteracy, or technicism that are ultimately responsible for the fact that everywhere the true educators are the first to be censored, tortured, shot, and silenced when a society decides the time has come for "order" to be restored. Anyone who knows the history of churches, or of philosophy from Plato to Rousseau, knows that it is not only modern grand inquisitors who resent the unfettered mind. What, then, distinguishes the educator's calling? What is it that divides the practice of education from other practices with which it is so often confused? What is the nature of the commitment that, when honored, makes the educator a necessary accomplice to suffering?

His commitment is to a thesis that cannot be proven: that the achievement of fully human consciousness, though it may be a tragic destiny, is the redeeming end of human evolution. To deny this thesis is either to practice in bad faith or to substitute for education such activities as socialization, instruction, or indoctrination, which have other ends. All three of these differ from education in that their primary purpose is the reproduction of something in the psyche of the student: for socialization, it is the authoritative order of society; for instruction, it is skills and information; for indoctrination, it is forms of dogma. Education, in contrast, is inherently subversive of the tasks of merely reproducing skills, information, and values. Educators do make use of this material, of course—not for its own sake but for a permanently revolutionary conception: the exposure of the student to a "conversation" among those who risk much of their comfort to ques-

tion the nature and point of existence itself. Because education is conscious and competent conversation about time and immortality; about memory and testament; about all that makes us more than mere bearers of skills, information, and dogma.

To see why this is a tragic destiny, one must inquire into the purpose of such a conversation. Yet the inquiry may be senseless. Conversation exists for no particular reason. It is of no direct use to anyone; it breeds questions in place of what once seemed answers; it troubles—indeed creates—conscience; left to itself, it can make Hamlets of us all. Perhaps such conversation is unnatural, if by natural one means performing only those functions which realize our finite and prudential sociobiological interests. Our fate is dominated by the evolving social norms and codes that aid our adjustment to our bodies. Why, then, does humankind invent the soul and send it forth in frail vessels of consciousness toward uncharted possibilities? Perhaps simply because consciousness, once awakened, scorns its own innocence; once infinity is imagined, all finitude becomes intolerable.

The origins and forms of conscience are often best discerned in narratives that illuminate the essence of a social practice. The paradigm story of education in which the conscience of this practice is depicted is the Book of Genesis. The mythic question for educators seems to be this: Why did a supreme and omniscient deity, knowing what would follow, place the tree of knowledge in Eden, yet forbid Adam to eat of its fruit? To explore this, let us make use of *Cain*, one of Lord Byron's lesser known verse plays, which addresses this question directly and therefore has much to say to educators. After Lucifer has revealed to Cain all that was, is, and ever shall be, Byron has Cain say this to Abel:

*The dead
The immortal, the unbounded, the omnipotent,
The overpowering mysteries of space—
The innumerable worlds that were and are—
A whirlwind of such overwhelming things,
Suns, moons, and earths, upon their loud-voiced spheres
Singing in thunder round me, as have made me
Unfit for mortal converse: leave me, Abel.*²

The fratricide follows almost inevitably when Abel tries to force Cain to worship a God whom Cain has come to despise because he is inscrutable and arbitrary. Significantly, Byron presents Lucifer as the pure educator, undivided by ambivalence about absolute consciousness as good or evil.

Lucifer: *I tempt none,
Save with the truth: was not the tree, the tree
of knowledge? and was not the tree of life
Still fruitful? Did I bid her pluck them not?
Did I plant things prohibited within
the reach of beings innocent, and curious
By their innocence? I would have made ye
Gods: and even He who thrust ye forth, so thrust ye
Because "ye should not eat the fruits of life,
And become gods as we." Were those his words?*

2. All quotes from Lord Byron's *Cain* are from *The Works of Lord Byron* (Leipzig: Bernh. Tauchnitz Jun., 1842), 4:207-272.

Cain: *They were, as I have heard from those who heard
them,
In thunder.*

Lucifer: *Then who was the demon? He
Who would not let ye live, or he who would have
made ye live for ever in the joy
And power of knowledge?*

Lucifer is merciless. He is consciousness untempered by compassion for the ignorance which at least makes men fit for "mortal converse." But he is also shrewd, for he presents God as driven by jealousy, as ruler of a kingdom of secrets he would not share.

For Byron's Lucifer, what ultimately drives God to creation is no motive of good or evil. It is infinite loneliness, the corollary of infinite consciousness.

*He is great...
But, in his greatness, is no happier than
We in our conflict! Goodness would not make
Evil; and what else hath he made? But let him
Sit on his vast and solitary throne,
Creating worlds, to make eternity
Less burthensome to his immense existence
And unparticipated solitude;
Let him crowd orb on orb: he is alone
Indefinite, indissoluble tyrant;
Could he but crush himself, 't were the best boon
He ever granted: but let him reign on,
And multiply himself in misery.
Spirits and Men, at least we sympathize—
And, suffering in concert, make our pangs
Innumerable, more endurable
By the unbounded sympathy of all
With all! But He! so wretched in his height,
So restless in his wretchedness, must still
Create, and re-create—*

To quell this infinite loneliness, it would seem that God must cease to be omniscient and enter into true community with other gods, thereby ceasing to be the One God; or he must create the perpetual student destined to converse respectfully in perpetual worship and perpetual pain with his maker about the nature of existence. Is there, in this narrative of God as maker, a paradigm for understanding man as mentor? Three themes in this play offer themselves for reflection: mixed motives, loss of innocence, and exile.

1. *Mixed motives.* God's motives are mixed. Loneliness, jealousy, compassion, and love all seem present in Eden. In Jewish tradition, Elie Wiesel tells us, Adam was made a fit companion for God. But the tradition also has it that Adam was bored (and boring?) in paradise.

*Since he had the universe to himself, he desired nothing,
thought of nothing and nobody. Happy, content, he seems
singularly uninteresting before his downfall.... One pictures his
life as drab, devoid of expectation, of stimulation.³*

Surely this cannot be ennui, the boredom of decadence, of world-weariness. Not yet. Rather it is the boredom of mere cleverness; of

3. Elie Wiesel, *Messengers of God* (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 11.

those without history and the power to make it. In his analysis of the Adamic myth, Paul Ricoeur reminds us of the triviality of interdictions against eating fruit, however magically endowed with power. By signifying the fruit as the fruit of the tree of knowledge, however, magic is eliminated from the issue altogether and things are trivial no longer. "What is forbidden" says Ricoeur, "is not this or that, but a state of autonomy which would make man the creator of the distinction between good and evil."⁴

4. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), p. 250.

An omniscient God knows the stakes and the outcome of such a situation. After clothing Adam's nakedness, and before expelling him from Eden, God says:

*Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.*⁵

5. Gen. 3:22-23.

Thus we may say with Ricoeur, "There begins an irreversible adventure, a crisis in the becoming of man, which will not reach its denouement until the final process of justification."⁶

6. Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*.

We do not see in the God of Genesis, as we do in Byron's Lucifer, a deity who would be pure educator. What we do see are many possibilities: an infinite *I* in need of a *thou*, a jealous master, a fearful parent, a perpetual teacher with a precocious pupil. At least, so the story goes, we have a God who offers man the possibility of education and provides him the free will with which to make the choice. Should the offer be accepted, things do seem arranged to lighten God's complicity in the consequences, whatever his motive.

Nothing here is unrecognizable by the educator's conscience. As socializer, instructor, and indoctrinator, the educator can say: Harken to the laws of the order that gave you birth; heed and prosper. Yet, what mortal does not tremble when the mere reproduction of ideas ceases and a deeper questioning begins; when teacher says to pupil what Pico della Mirandola said in 1487 through the voice of Eden's God:

*We have given you, Oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may, with premeditation, select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may, by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace for yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.*⁷

7. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (Chicago: Regnery/Gateway, 1956), pp. 7-8.

Who dares take full responsibility for saying *that*? We all hedge, God on down.

2. *Loss of innocence.* What sort of innocence was lost with Adam's Fall? We cannot put it quite that way, I think. Innocence may be the negation of a malaise in which we feel trapped. There is a state of innocence appropriate to every malady of the spirit that we can put into words. First there is a Fall, only then an Eden. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."⁸ The serpent, of course, assures Eve she will not die. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil."⁹ Are the two statements incompatible? When is it death to open one's eyes? "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked...."¹⁰

8. Gen. 2:17.

9. Gen. 3:4-5.

10. Gen. 3:7.

Now that we are at last emerging from sexual fetishism in the West, it has become possible to understand the fall into clothing as something other than God's animosity toward pornography. "Insofar as clothes imply social estrangement or differentiation by status," Kenneth Burke reminds us, as would all sociologists, "they are by the same token a kind of 'fall.' In themselves they are at odds with the natural order; yet nakedness is at odds with the order of our 'second nature.'" What is this second nature into which we have fallen? It is, of course, civil order—social life. Clothes signify the cancellation of that primordial equality, symbolized by nakedness, and its replacement by the hierarchical order of rank and power. (The first example of the latter was God's interdiction of the fruit; only when violated was the interdiction revealed for what it truly was—the imposition of authority.) Clothes also symbolize the vanity, the dissimulations, the proprieties, and the self-aggrandizement which Rousseau so bitterly depicts as the price of the human estate.

These are the roots of evil, generated not by willful sin or malign demons but by the necessary complicity of all in the consequences of social order. How is this tree different from all other trees in the garden, since it looks equally pleasant, though its fruit be condemned? To know, one must eat and find out. The loss of innocence, then, is a consequence not of a magical property of the fruit but of the fact of its prohibition. The knowledge of rules constitutes the fall from innocence. Without limits there is no freedom because there is no differentiation. If there is no differentiation, there can be no *I* and no *thou* and no *it*. Whatever other motives God had, he forbade that the fruit be eaten so as to teach man that he is not God. The loss of innocence is the birth of the human condition—the consciousness that one is forever suspended between finitude and infinitude, between temporality and omniscience, and between animality and divinity. Man does not sin because he *is* free. He is free because he dramatizes some rules as capable of being sinned against. The Fall of Adam, in which we participate whenever his story engages our emotions, is the mythic dramatization of human autonomy. The loss of innocence symbolizes our ambivalence about its price.

We must ask whether any of this is recognizable by the educator's conscience, and whether any innocence is sacrificed to education. Why is it part of the conventional wisdom that only those with toleration for

ambiguity are safely fit to be educated? It is because to be educated is to be exposed, like Byron's Cain, to the endless disjunctions between intentions, actions, and consequences that constitute the injustice of all things as they appear in narrative time. To be educated is to know infinite desire—for justice, life, love, fulfillment—while comprehending the finitudes of all hope and all effort. Magic is the annihilation of these disjunctions, the pseudo-reconciliation of wish and fulfillment; that is why so many believe in it. Education subverts magic. The disciplines of reason depose our wishes from the center of things to the humbler status of mere facts to be contemplated as any others.

3. *Exile*. This third theme suggested by Byron's *Cain* concerns Adam's departure from Eden. He is cast out with cherubim and flaming sword barring any return. The story does not mention if Adam argued his right to stay. Would he have wanted to if the terms of exile were less harsh? It is credible to doubt it. Eden may not be the same when one has eaten of the tree of knowledge. Paradise without innocence is a garden in which nothing happens, a diorama in God's museum of creation, a climate-controlled bore outside of time. Because there had been no history to induce cynical withdrawal from the temptations of experience, Adam might well have looked about him with a newly jaundiced eye. The threatening demeanor of God confuses things. Had God offered forgiveness and a renewed lease, we might have found Adam departing nonetheless, exiled not by God but by the necessary psychology of consciousness itself. There is a sense in which it can be said that the first eating of the fruit of knowledge is not in itself a free act of choice but rather the act by which, through its consequences, all freedom of choice is constituted. In order to weigh choices, one must know something, be able to look fore and aft in time, feel vicariously the contours of experience. John Stuart Mill put the matter aptly:

It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool or the pig is of contrary opinion, it is because they only know their side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.

If so, Eden could suddenly appear as fit for only pigs and fools, not men of knowledge.

Surely this makes sense to the educator's conscience. The educated soul is cast out of society's comforting innocence—the innocence of the socializer's mystifications, false histories, magic, and propaganda that reconcile the unreconcilable and tempt the neophyte with the certitude that what is here and now is of the eternal order of things. The educated soul is exiled into time to till the soil of history and eat of its fruits in hope and faith, while suffering the burdens of doubt.

What is it, then, that we really mean by a failure in the educator's conscience of calling: vulgarity? immorality? greed? corruption? I think not. Should we expect of ourselves the rectitude of God? Failure of nerve, I suspect, is at the heart of the strange quotations that provide occasion for these reflections; they betray a sense of futility, defrocked aspirations, self-doubt, and loss of pride in an age of failed ideas. For a great many people, no disillusionment seems quite so secretly intense as that connected with

the university. The ivory tower is symbol of scorn on the surface only. But under this surface it symbolizes a monastery, a retreat in which people expect to find (even if they do not seek) realities beneath mere appearances.

The poignancy of the ivory-tower metaphor is peculiarly modern. There has been a sharp change between the classical view and the modern view of education's benefits, a change that has affected the conception of educational experience as such. This cultural change in the meaning of education accounts for the ungrounded loneliness in the model of the educated consciousness presented in this article. The change I am referring to is the transformation of philosophy's central project, a change stemming from Descartes, in which the confident search for the structure of the Real (metaphysics) is replaced by the skeptical search for minimally secure foundations of any knowledge claims whatever (epistemology).

It is necessary at this point to remind ourselves quite candidly how much the modern view implicit in this essay departs from the classical view (Plato to Jefferson) regarding the psychic benefits and costs of education to individual and public. In the classical view, to simplify greatly, benefits outweighed costs. Education was rooted in the conviction that a knowable distinction exists between appearance and reality, the clarification of which is the time-honored task of philosophical metaphysics.

Modern philosophy since Descartes has found this assumption increasingly problematic. Education under these conditions was considered intrinsically nihilistic, an endless round of demystification to no purpose, ungrounded in any resting place of final understanding. Education became simply another ride in the Disneyland that is increasingly the metaphor for modern ideals of consumer existence. If education is, in the modern view, the pointless cultivation of mind, why should any regime tolerate its corrosive power to subvert all "noble lies" (Plato's conception of socially useful myths)? This essay's model of the educated person, it must be admitted, is virtually Nietzschean: one who can live nobly in the shadow of a possibly nihilistic but supremely self-aware consciousness. It may be conceded that some are born to the vocation of education and its terrors, even in the modern form of that vocation. But are they like yesterday's monks and mystics—to be tolerated but hardly acceptable as models, for the yeomanry, of the public benefits of education? The question before us is the fate of the conviction that education is redemptive for democracy. In place of this conviction we must pose questions: Is democracy *incompatible* with education? Is democracy compatible with education? Is education redemptive (much less necessary) for democracy? (These are three quite distinctive questions. An answer to one does not provide for the others.)

There is much evidence from history and social science that democracy is *incompatible* with education. Educational ideals are endlessly sabotaged and subverted by the unintended effects of social organization (e.g., social-class interests, bureaucratic distortions, communication pathologies). The evolutionary demands of social control repeatedly supersede the cultural ideals of education. Finally, educational philosophers from Plato to Ortega y Gasset have noted that the democratization of culture seems to generate vulgarization.

As to our second question, whether there is any notable compatibility between democracy and education: democracies stress the rapid circulation of elites (e.g., through the spread of economic opportunity, social mobility, political representation of plural constituencies). As efficient circulatory systems for ideas, talents, and innovations, democracies provide more protection than do other regimes against elite closure—the hardening of cultural and social arteries that brings about political cardiac arrest.

This leaves us with the third and philosophically most crucial question: Does education have any public benefits that seem at all redemptive (much less necessary) for democracy? If the answer is negative, then further pursuit of the first two questions is pointless. It is not necessary to assume that education is a vocation for everyone in order to argue that it is redemptive for a democracy. But we must establish that to a certain common degree all citizens should be seriously exposed to education; we must state the uniform public benefit of education in a democracy. The general trend toward the technicization of culture, language, and psyche is the major present threat to democratic ideals. Technicism involves an uncritical abdication of personal responsibility over language by way of premature acceptance of expertise claims; it is a blindness toward the logical continuities between expert and everyday judgments. Modern complex societies generate many technicist trends. Eventually technicist culture is likely to facilitate a mystifying authority language resting on metaphors derived from technology and engineering. The logic of this symbolic edifice, accessible only to the computer-trained elect, would generate the concepts, judgments, and decisions that control the lives of populations—a situation amounting to subjugation by metaphor.

In the face of this threat to all classically conceived connections between personal rationality and democratic political culture, only education stands as a barrier. If education is to play this redemptive role, however, it cannot do it under false pretenses. It cannot return to any form of the Platonic status of midwife to philosopher-kings. Nor should education be reduced to a euphemism for other forms of pedagogy whose ends are merely to reproduce some form of the status quo. Ironically, modern democracy, to be redeemed from technicist mystiques, may require a form of mind trained into ironic distance from all forms of mystification, even the noble lies of democracy itself. Education can no longer, with integrity, ratify democracy by articulating to its citizens the metaphysics of the Real or the structures of the self-evident. But it can aspire to be a critique of signification as such, a form of elite literacy that redeems democracy by combining potentially nihilist suspicion with a dignified respect for all forms of symbolization—a power in which all persons participate as speakers and interpreters. This aspiration would make of education a critical process that never rests, but not one without redemptive byproducts. If it cannot mediate any final revelation, it can at least demystify tyrannies both physical and symbolic.

As with all visions, this view of education has its noble and base versions. The educated consciousness, as depicted here in its modern terms, has not of necessity a conscience. As every lover of conversation knows, the ironic critic-as-destroyer is a real and often

brilliant social type. The crafted intellect can be an instrument of death. Education alone cannot produce the courage to act beyond the immediate guarantees of reason; what is needed is a form of courage necessary for the making of history. With this point, we come full circle to the classic philosophers who, through inquiry into the habits of character, sought to comprehend how contemplation and action might be reconcilable as human ends. Modern educational policy analysis needs to have this ancient concern rephrased in contemporary terminology.

In concluding, I will let another voice summarize the spirit of these reflections:

As civilized beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries. It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves. Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation. And it is this conversation which, in the end, gives place and character to every human activity and utterance.¹¹

11. Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Harper, Basic Books, 1962), pp. 198-199.