

## EDUCATION AND "THE STATE": AN ALTERNATIVE VIEWING

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Aristotle wrote, in the *Politics*, that "education should be one and the same for all...it should be public and not private." He realized that people would always disagree on what ought to be stressed (the useful in life, virtue, or higher knowledge); but he said that "the training in things which are of common interest should be the same for all." What was of common interest depended upon what he called the "constitution" prevailing; and the obligation of education was to cultivate the virtues of the good citizen is defined by that constitution. Given a democratic constitution, it would follow, education ought to cultivate the virtues and capacities associated with free inquiry, communication, and mutual regard. John Dewey, who saw the "idea of education as a freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims," also made it clear that any criterion for adequate education implies "a *particular* social ideal." And then he went on: "A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder." Interaction, communication, conversation: these were the essentials; and Dewey was quite aware that public intervention of some sort would be required if the "democratic conception of education" were to be realized at all. To leave people to their own devices would mean that the privileged and energetic would take full advantage of the resources available; but, if arrangements were not deliberately made and opportunities were not provided, there would be no guarantee for the mass of children. The damage done to them would be irreparable; so would the damage to the social body itself. If a informed and articulate public is a necessity for a democratic society (and Dewey clearly believed it was), a lack of appropriate education for potential members of that public cannot but undermine democracy.

I want to mention still another view that places focal emphasis upon the creation of a public and the durability of a "common world." Hannah Arendt, noting the American view that every child has an inalienable civic right to an education, wrote: "Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world." For her, people have to come together in a public space if, indeed, the common world is to be continued and renewed.

None of these views, it must be clear, proposes that the individual be make the creature of the state nor that his/her development (or "excel-

lence") be made subservient to the requirements of what Dewey described as an "objectified manifestation of a will and reason which far transcend the desires and purposes which can be found among individuals..." All of them, in one dimension or another, suggest that individuality or self-identification is a function of communication and membership. And all imply that the public sphere, where communication and being-with-others come into their own, where reciprocity becomes attainable, must be deliberately fostered and continually remade. The activities of educating are thought of as aspects of that fostering and remaking, even as they are thought of as means of awakening people to reflective and responsible life.

Now I realize that these constitute what might be called normatives. They are imagined possibilities; they are what certain philosophic thinkers conceive to be valuable, what they believe *ought* to be. If you pay heed to what they say, you will notice that there are no either/ors in their perceptions of social and/or political reality. Freedom is not opposed to engagement or involvement; personal growth is not made antithetical to the power of the state. If we were to go further, we would find that cognition is not viewed as exclusive of emotion, that perception and imagination both have parts to play. And, certainly, where the modern thinkers are concerned, there are no single standards or unchanging structures; because multiplicity of perspectives is assumed to be significant and lived situations are taken to be the ground.

It is, I believe, only when we have the normative in mind that we can discern the deficiencies in what actually exists. Jean-Paul Sartre made that point: it is only when we can imagine a better state of things, he said, that we become aware of lacks in existing conditions. When we become aware of them, when we refuse them, we begin creating values; creating values, we struggle to surpass, to reach beyond, to bring into being what is not yet. That, I think, is the mood in which we need to approach the question of education and the state today. A superficial look at what is happening and what is being said is bound to lead to a kind of unease; and it is not difficult to place the onus for what is happening on the shoulders of what many call "the state." Where else are we to locate responsibility for the official attacks on "Secular Humanism", the openings to prayer in the schools, the limitations on choice when it comes to reproduction, the interventions in pediatric wards, the attempts at censorship, the interferences with the Freedom of Information Act? To one degree or another, all of these strike us as intrusions, unwarranted and, yes, immoral intrusions into private lives and decision-making. Moreover much of what is occurring today signals a type of thought control to some of us, and what is described as a "chilling" of authentically free speech. We are tempted, in consequence, to polarize the situation: we see the "state" versus the individual with all his/her inherent or "natural" rights. This leads, too often, to a reductionist position. We concentrate on making "hands-off" demands; we sometimes take refuge in a regressive *laissez faire* philosophy or a libertarianism that denies what we have come to know about human and social realities. This seems to me to be far removed from the creation of values, from trying to bring into being what is not yet.

How important is it to think in terms of the state as a causal agency, as what John Dewey called "an archetypal entity"? Most of us are aware that the state originated in the monopoly of force. We are familiar with the claimed sovereignty of the state over other associations in a given territory, as we are with its monopoly of prescriptive law and, along with that, its legitimation of certain individual rights. Although many thinkers have tried to demonstrate that the essence of the state is to be found in justice or freedom or equality, I think most people would agree (that the basis of the political state is power. It may be, as Michel Foucault once said, that "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free"; since power is not exerted except when there is a possibility of recalcitrance. It may be, as Hannah Arendt thought, that "power corresponds to the human ability...to act in concert," and that it always belongs to a group. "Power," she wrote, "needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does need is legitimacy.. Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow. Legitimacy, when challenged, bases itself on an appeal to the past, while justification relates to an end that lies in the future."

The implication that power is, in many senses, a function of interpretation by human agents who *empower* others to act in their name leads me to Dewey's view of the public as a state. He made the point, it may be recalled, that many human transactions have consequences that involve people not directly engaged in them. Think of a private decision by a landlord to evict a family behind in rent (or, worse, to have a building burned in order to empty it). Think of two young people deciding to drive home when drunk. Think of a curriculum decision to include creationist material and exclude evolutionary theory from biology classes. Think of the abuse or beating of little children. Think of a factory manager permitting chemical waste to be buried in the woods abutting a town. When the consequences of any of these are recognized, a shared interest is created, said Dewey. The predicament of the homeless family, of those endangered by drunken teen-agers, of those educationally deprived, of those abused, or of those threatened by poisonous waste cannot or is not likely to be taken care of by those whose transactions led to it; nor is it likely to be dealt with adequately by those immediately affected. Consequences of this sort call a public into being, or ought to. Agencies have to be created; measures have to be taken; officials have to be given specific responsibilities. "The public," wrote Dewey, "is organized in and through those officers who act in behalf of its interests."

What troubled Dewey in 1927, of course, was what he called "the eclipse of the public," evidenced in the lack of adequate communication of dialogue and in the loss of "genuine community life"; and we cannot but acknowledge that this is even more desperately the case today. The "eclipse" however, did not change the fact that those purportedly looking out for the consequences of private transactions in the public sphere were themselves to be considered human agents acting in response to their own or to institutional interests. Considering such agents or representatives today, we would have to add the importance of bureaucratic interests and controls, as

we would have to call attention to cost-benefit or technicist or statistical thinking; but I would prefer to think about education in relation to a diverse group of actual decision-makers (or functionaries; or even clerks) than about education in relation to an abstract entity called "the state."

It must be kept in mind, in any event, that public education in this country is a local and not a national undertaking. Yes, the Federal government has taken action with regard to public schools, most particularly in the last two decades; but state constitutions, not the United States Constitution, mandate the establishment of schools. Educational policy, moreover, regarding admission, financial support, length of the school year, and so on has traditionally been made on the state rather than the Federal level. Beginning in the years after the Civil War, campaigns have been undertaken to secure Federal aid for the schools, generally for the sake of overcoming the widespread inequities in the provision of educational opportunities. Certain of these inequities were due to the poverty of school districts across the nation and their inability to raise taxes sufficient for adequate schooling. Others were due, of course, to segregation in the south and the separate and glaringly unequal education offered to Black children. The sticking points, when it came to the passage of the necessary legislation, were the matter of civil rights and the matter of aid to nonpublic (mainly parochial) schools. And, each time the question of federal aid was raised, one group or other would inevitably resuscitate the issue of federal control.

I find it difficult to assert that, when significant federal legislation was finally passed under the Johnson Administration, "the state" suddenly recognized its moral responsibility for educating all the children. I find it equally difficult to discuss the relation between "education and the state" in the light of "the state's" moral responsibility; since I am not at all sure what that might mean. I grant that there are rights and wrongs somehow involved in educational discussion; but there are also constitutional questions and a wide range of legal questions, many of which have led to an unprecedented entry of the courts into the educational domains.

If, indeed, there is a general ethical agreement in this country that persons should be granted regard, that individual expression should be valued, that growth should be fostered, that differences should be respected, we are in a position to say that domination and manipulation in classrooms are morally wrong. What with the compulsory character of public education, many have pointed out that domination and manipulation do indeed take place. Moreover, there exists a "hegemonic" pressure, meaning an imposition of ideology upon innocent children who are not made aware of what is happening to them. Not only are there hidden curricula; there is a differential distribution of knowledge, depending upon social class. Through these means, it is said, the culture is reproduced in all its present inequities, in its present state of "normalization." Young people's lived experiences are demeaned if they are seen to be at odds with: so-called "middle-class culture"; and, more often than not, young people suffering from cognitive or other deficits ("undeserved disadvantages," as John Rawls put it) are blamed for their failures. Since many of these deficits are due to poverty, poor nutrition, deteriorated neighborhoods, and broken families, it follows

that increasing numbers of children are frustrated in their development by factors they cannot control. For those who believe that every child has a right to learn to learn, to become whatever he/she has the capacity to become, this situation is morally wrong. For those who are convinced that everyone, even the youngest child, is responsible for his/her own success or failure, whatever the circumstances, the situation is acceptable. Consider, they will remind us, the thousands upon thousands of immigrant's children who, through hard work and the willingness to delay gratification, "made it" in this country. This is the land of opportunity, they will say. Why not leave things as they have always been?

As they have always been? We need first to call attention to the dynamic of what has been called a "post-industrial society," an administered society, a technological society. There is no way, if we are willing to confront what has been happening, to deny the impacts of the communications revolution, the "geopolitics of information," the automatization of production, computerization, the surge of "high technology" and the false promises to which it has given birth. Nor is there - or ought there to be - any way of denying the threat of nuclear holocaust and planetary destruction. What has happened in western society has not happened "naturally" or even randomly. The origins of most of the great socio-economic-technical changes are in a mode of cognition described as technological rationality, a particular kind of rationality linked inextricably to ideas of systematic planning, quantification, and control. It probably should be held in mind that the people who perfected this way of dealing with (and inquiring into) the phenomena of the human world - like those who developed the atomic bomb - were university people, members of the professional elite, codifiers of theoretical knowledge. Not only were they able to move outside their laboratories and studies to places where nuclear devices were actually made and tested, where counter-insurgency movements were planned, where governments were subverted (as well as to places where cancer cures were developed, green revolutions invented, linguistic understandings applied to teaching, addictions overcome); they generally did so in response to technical or empirical or pragmatic imperatives, without considering whether what they were doing was morally justified, good, or right.

Rather than talking about the relation between education and the state, I prefer to talk about the relation between what happens in schools, colleges, universities (and in the other places where teaching and learning presumably occur) and the people in the bureaucratized systems now dominant in what ought to be a public space. Like Richard Falk, writing recently in *The Nation*, I believe that "the institutions of government are substantially captive to a militarized state dominated by unaccountable and inaccessible career civil servants and reinforced by special interests that greatly influence political discourse." Given the eclipse of the public at the present time, these civil servants cannot be viewed as acting in behalf of the public's interests; nor can the power they have be ascribed what Arendt speaks of as legitimacy. Individuals, as persons capable of speaking in terms of who rather than what they are, may be accessible; certain ones may be capable of holding themselves morally accountable. But, in the absence of a public space where they might appear before others and take their own au-

thentic initiatives, they are likely to remain functionaries unable to take responsibility as public representatives.

Where education is concerned, this has been made evident in the several reports stemming from the Federal government, most especially *The Nation at Risk*. That report calls for the attainment of educational "excellence" in the interests of national defense and enhanced economic productivity. Excellence primarily identified with higher test scores and used as an antonym for "mediocrity, is to be achieved by means of a greater emphasis on mathematics, science, and computer literacy. Requirements are to be increased; there is to be a greater concern for reading and writing; the school day or the school year is to be lengthened; teachers are to be induced to better performance by means of merit pay. Significantly, nothing is said about increasing Federal funding; nothing is said about support systems for those likely to fall by the wayside because of the insistence on higher standards; nothing is said about ethics, morality, or equity. It is the case that the National Commission on Excellence was composed of people presumed to represent the spectrum of those involved in education - except, of course, for the children. But many significant groups, including the National Education Association, made it clear that they were not consulted, that the practitioner's view particularly was scarcely taken into account. The same must be said about the harried parent in the inner city, the community organizer, the social worker, the child yearning to be a dancer or a painter, the social visionary. In any case, the focus of the Report was exceedingly narrow - singling out, as it did, mainly technical intelligences from what we now know to be a multiplicity of human potentials or intelligences. And why? The members of the Commission, in their roles as members, were responding - not to an articulated public interest - but to the imperative of what were called national defense and economic productivity.

It does not seem to me to be a simple instance of the state denying its moral responsibility or defining that responsibility differently. There are those who explain the neglect of equity considerations, remediation, integration, and the rest by saying that the ideology of this administration is different from that of preceding ones and that that explains the overlooking of what seemed so fundamental not many years ago. I am not so sure that it is a mere question of ideology. It may be recalled that the period just before the passage of the education legislation in the 1960s was the Sputnik period, when attention was turned unabashedly to the gifted and talented in the scientific and engineering fields. "Excellence" was the watchword then, as well; and, although John Gardner wrote a book subtitled "Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?", most people were prone to think in terms of either/or and to answer negatively. At the same time, in the period immediately after the Sputnik shock, few challenges were raised to the curriculum reform movements that were so clearly oriented to cognitive achievement, to talent searches, to "excellence." After all, it had long been an American preoccupation to be preeminent scientifically and technologically; nothing appeared second to that.

How then explain the apparently abrupt shift to concern for the excluded and the disinherited? How explain the Elementary and Secondary Education

Act of 1965, with its dramatic emphasis on aid to poor children, reversing cultural deprivation, individualizing learning, compensating for under-privilege? Yes, there had been the Brown decision; yes, there had been a growing recognition within social science of the crippling impacts of poverty; yes, there had been the kinds of warnings issued by James B. Conant that "a mass of unemployed and frustrated Negro youth in congested areas of a city is a social phenomenon that may be compared to the piling up of inflammable material in an empty building..." Most significantly, however, there was Civil Rights movement, already cresting with the March on Washington in 1963. The participants in the movement, Black and white, were making claims, claims referring to Constitutional rights and, as well, to value commitments the American people had ostensibly made over time: commitments to fairness, decency, consideration of others' interests, personal freedom. But they were not only asserting justifiable claims; they were creating a variety of public spaces - before the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, in churches, in southern luncheonettes, on southern highways, in bus depots - where individual human beings were coming together in speech and action, where they were achieving freedoms for themselves many had never known before. William James once said that a claim creates an obligation; but it is obvious that obligations have not simply to be registered - they have to be acted upon out in the open. The Civil Rights movement provided opportunities for many kinds of people to act on their felt (or chosen) obligations and to do so for a variety of reasons in a variety of ways.

We all realize that it came to an end in blazes of gunfire, in the poisoned atmosphere of the Vietnam War, in a concatenation of conflicting outcries and demands, in an overtaking of the public spaces by disparate types of narcissism. Cynicism, hopelessness, resistance to the necessary structural changes, persisting racism: all these were factors in the debacle. But the apparent defeats, the disillusionments, the miscalculations do not invalidate what happened at those moments of civil disobedience, linked arms, soaring songs, ongoing dialogues. What happened was the emergence of an articulate public - or articulate publics - able to create and name a significant common interest. The consequences of private decisions to discriminate, to segregate, to demean, to ~hcw contempt were being recognized; and individuals from all over the country (speaking ordinary, non-technical language) were taking responsibility for doing something about them. Also, there was a "Dream," articulated by the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. but shared by many; and that sense of imagined possibility was enabling people to identify what was lacking - and drawing them forward to repair.

My point is that it was the strength of an articulated public interest that, for a time, broke through the barriers of technicist language and pragmatic interest and brought into existence what appeared as a moral concern. It was overwhelmed, it is true, by calculative measures, an emphasis on effectiveness and efficiency, by the positivist preoccupation with technical controls. But it may also have been eroded by a second eclipse of the publics that had come into being, by a drowning out of what Jurgen Habermas calls "intersubjectively shared ordinary language" by the languages of technique. Little effort was exerted to keep alive the contexts of reciprocity; even in

the schools and colleges, there was a fearsome silence where once there had been debate and dialogue.

Sheldon Wolin, writing about the domination by cost-benefit language, has said that the language of value has been usurped by the Moral Majority; and I think we are all aware of the degree to which conservatives have taken unto themselves the cause of what they call the family, human reproduction, virtue, even freedom. But they have done so without attending to need, dependence, and the necessity for care. Relying more often than not on sectarian dogma, they reject pluralism; they reject multiplicity; they reject communication and dialogue. They are the ones who insist on the unadulterated basics, who object to regulation in the name of equity (or affirmative action or fair representation), while they justify interferences in private lives in the name of uncritical (and uncriticizable) pieties. It is no wonder that their ethos is so appealing to those who reject public education, who campaign for voucher systems and tuition tax credits. All we need to do is to glance at the proliferating "free" Christian schools, the doctrine-ridden private schools, the fundamentalist schools. Each of them exists in a closed circle; each responds to parochial concerns. Inattentive to social deprivations and suffering, disinterested in the multiple perspectives of the culture, they stand in the way of a public emergence; they confirm the status quo.

Again, I am aware of the mystifications and the systems of domination that work in the public schools. I am certainly aware of the ways in which the schools have tracked and stratified, as I am aware of the ways in which present Federal efforts are moving closer and closer to making children creatures of the state. I know how the demands of the capitalist and technological society override the demands of democracy and what the democratic conception of education entails. But this does not mean to me that contemporary schools (bureaucratically managed as they usually are) should give way to private education; since private education, particularly under religious guidance, does not signify the liberation of children from external controls. Nor does it open the possibility for children to participate in wider circles of associated life, learning to see through other eyes, learning to work with others (diverse others) to constitute something between themselves - something that may be continually enriched and enlarged, something that might be thought of as a common world.

Public education is intended to educate all the children. Public schools, elementary and secondary, differ enormously from state to state, district to district; and it must be admitted that those in more or less homogeneous, more or less prosperous communities do the best for their children. It must be recalled, however, that public schools in many places, and perhaps particularly in large cities, have provided gateways for all sorts of strangers, for all the painful realities of stratification and exclusion. Of course bureaucratic and management attitudes have too often countervailed against the values and the longings of local grass roots groups; and the erosion of community life, like the eclipse of larger publics, has rendered many of these groups powerless. They have not been able to come together to act in concert, to allow power to spring up among them, the kind of power that could allow their desires to find voice. Nevertheless, I would insist, the potential is there; what is called "the state" does not exercise direct control.



A great deal depends upon teachers and the relationships they can make among themselves and between themselves and those affected by schools. Much depends upon their ability to empower the young to reach out from their own lived lives, with the sure knowledge that they are listened to and granted full regard. It is not so much a question of whether all young people should be given "the same" education; it is a question of releasing the various young, in their plurality, to become more and more thoughtful about the situations that concern them and about the ways in which those situations connect with the shared, intersubjective world around. All are entitled to be empowered to know how to interpret those situations, to be empowered in a fashion that is appropriate for them and to the stocks of knowledge they already have at hand.

That means, for me, that all are entitled to be introduced in some manner to the "languages" or the "ways of knowing" or the "symbol systems" by means of which we in our culture make sense of our worlds. It is possible to teach the knowing how associated with history or the natural sciences or literature without licking children into an orthodoxy or a fixed world view. What is offered can be offered as in some sense provisional: this is the way, we can say, people have interpreted what was happening or what is happening in the physical or the human world. Some have done so empirically, some logically, some imaginatively; some have done so according to the norms of a particular art form or science; others have altered those norms in response to changes in the world. The point of making them available today is to enable newcomers to develop perspectives on their own lived lives, even as they are ushered into what some call the "conversation" that has been going on over time. Naturally, we hope they are initiated into that conversation with an ability to take a critico-creative view, with an ability to test what people have been saying over the years against their own experience, which (after all) may never have been taken into account - as women's experiences were not, or the experiences of children, or the experiences of those called "minorities."

I am talking about an education as far removed from parochialism as any education can be, because I have openings in mind, continuing openings, not end products, not fixed or final truth. I think that what I am saying is what Hannah Arendt had in mind when she spoke about loving our children too much to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices. To introduce them to our world and to engage them with our ways of seeing but not to determine what there is to be seen. I think back to my own good fortune, for instance, in being taught *how* to enter the illusioned world of *Moby Dick* and the remembered world of *A Room of One's Own*. Once I knew how (and, after a while, I began teaching myself more and more about what was involved in knowing how) I could take my own imaginary journeys out to sea, not someone else's; I could confront in my own terms what it actually might mean to have a room of my own and to choose myself in a usually resistant world. Once that happened, I could perceive my own lived life differently and from more vantage points and with a heightened sense of possibility; and I hope that, as my perspectives were enriched, I had more to say.

Helping the young to come to know in this fashion is to empower them in a great variety of unpredictable ways. If, in their classrooms or their meeting rooms or their living rooms, they are at once released to come together in speech and action, they will almost surely find out more about what they know. At once, as in no other situation, they will be in a position to pursue their own freedom. I do not believe, you see, that freedom is an original endowment. I believe it has to be continually achieved, and that it can only be achieved along with others by live persons willing to cut themselves loose from anchorage and choose and act in an always widening world. The philosopher Merleau-Ponty spoke once of our individual existences diffusing around themselves, so to speak - and of how "me for myself and the other for himself must always stand out against a background of For Others, I for the other and the other for me."

It is with some of this - and its significance for education - in mind that I find it so hard to oppose freedom to equality or sameness to uniformity. Knowing how much depends on present publics and upon engaged teachers, I continue to find it hard to say that the state is morally responsible for this kind of teaching and learning. There are terrible obstacles in the way; but I believe that moral responsibility can only become meaningful when people come together and form themselves into publics or communities, come together openly in a public space. Only then can they *hold* responsible those who are supposed to be their representatives, who are supposed to take action with respect to the consequences of private transactions - especially those that demean others, that lead to neglect, that frustrate happiness and growth. I would hope for diversity in that space, as much as possible, even as I would hope for equality in the sense of an equality of regard for each one's being, each one's perspective, each one's point of view. It is as diverse persons speak from their own vantage points and tell their own stories - with due regard for what they are coming to know as the culture's story - that something common can emerge among them, something they value in common and want to keep alive. Two images come to my mind when I say that. One is the image of the large round dining room table at the end of Bergman's film, *Fanny and Alexander*, that rendering of what the lecherous old uncle calls "the little world," of old and young, the newly born and the world-weary, the theatre people and the ones who do the ordinary work of the world. Another is the image at the end of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* of the family, coming from so many places, come together "celebrating each other." Colie, who has moved from objectness and isolation to a capacity to be with others and name her world, no longer addresses her letter to "Dear God," This one begins: "Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear Everything. Dear God." And it ends, "...I don't think us feel old at all. And us so happy. Matter of fact, I think this the youngest us ever felt. Amen."

Hannah Arendt told a story once that provides another metaphor for what I have in mind. She heard it from a French poet, Rene Char, who fought in the French Resistance during the Second World War and who felt, when the war was over, that he had been thrust back into the "sad opaqueness" of a private life, a life centered about nothing but itself, and that (in consequence) he had lost his "treasure." The idea was that those who joined the

Resistance (having done so quite voluntarily) had somehow found themselves by doing so.

Struggling together, they could afford to be with one another without the usual disguises or masks. "In this nakedness, stripped of all masks - of those which society assigns to its members as well as those which the individual fabricates for himself in his psychological reactions against society - they had been visited for the first time in their lives by an apparition of freedom, not, to be sure, because they acted against tyranny (that was true for every soldier in the allied armies) - but because they had become 'challengers', had taken the initiative upon themselves and therefore, without knowing or even noticing it, had begun to create that public space between themselves where freedom could appear." And, as Char himself put it, "At every meal that we eat together, freedom is invited to sit down. The chair remains vacant, but the place is set."

If there is to be the moral responsibility we seek, if persons are to be free and at once cared for, if they are to be provided opportunities to make sense of their worlds and find their own voices as they do so, there must be more and more attempts to resist, to challenge. Nowadays the challengers must include, not merely the gifted white middle class, not merely the well-meaning liberals, but minorities of all sorts, women, even children. They must come together in whatever spaces they can clear - in classrooms, auditoriums, corridors, back yards - and try to speak in their own voices as they choose their own initiatives. There are models, precedents in fact and fiction: the village of Le Chambon in occupied France where "goodness happened" not forty years ago; the Mississippi back roads during Freedom Summer; the Gdansk shipyard at the birth of Solidarity; the fictional Oran in Albert Camus's *"The Plague"* when certain people formed sanitary squads to fight the plague and, suddenly, the plague became the concern of all. (At the end, the narrator wants "to state quite simply what we learn in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise.")

In our search for morality in the relation between education and what surrounds, we too are facing pestilence in the form of technicism, false piety, mean-spiritness, and special interest. It is clearly time to form sanitary squads. This may be one of the obligations of Humanists today: to fight the plague by opening the public space, by struggling for an articulate public, by setting a place for freedom and taking initiatives never thought of before.