

Justus Buchler is Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. An earlier and more extended version of this article appeared in *The Journal of General Education*, Vol. VII, No. 1, October, 1954. pp. 7-17.

What is a Discussion?

by Justus Buchler

What the traits of a discussion are and what the traits of a good discussion are appear to be two different questions. I do not feel heroic enough to attempt an exhaustive answer to either, although perhaps in dealing with the first, which it is my inclination to do, some conclusions may emerge about the second.

It may be true, as the Greeks have told us, that men by nature desire to know. I have never encountered a student who did not desire to know. Unfortunately, the real problem is whether students desire to learn, and whether, among those who do, there is any sense of what actual inquiry or discovery entails. The first major job of a teacher, and maybe in the last analysis the only one, is to implant the spirit and experience of inquiry — or, better, of query, if I may import a term I have used elsewhere to designate probing in the widest possible sense, that is, probing which can be directed toward making or acting no less than toward stating. Whatever else a comparison of one teaching method with another aims at, it should consider which method is the best means of accomplishing this job. And in any such comparison the realities of the school situation within the cultural situation merit attention at the very outset. The school is an institution which receives young persons from society at large. We need not fool ourselves; the contrast between the values to which the student has been subjected and the demands of the school is enormous, and it cannot be obliterated by the vague notion that the school is a microcosm of society. The school, though a body social, is not primarily a mirror of a culture, and if it ever were, it would cease to have any function.

The student is one among a vast cultural majority who have about as much understanding of what a school is and of what its ideal values are as of the other side of the moon. A current writer speaks of an unprecedented "hunger for learning," an "adulation of learning" in our time — a pitiable identification of the passion for quiz programs or the testimony of registration figures with the love of ideas. It is no mystery why parents who themselves have gone to school are so often scarcely less ignorant of the sense of learning than anybody else. They passed through school in their day with a cultural armor that would have resisted even the most self-conscious instruction or the most arduously wrought curriculum of the present. Developments since the first World War have, by and large, made the situation a more hopeful one. But circumstances contrive to perpetuate the moral isolation of the school.

At its worst, schooling means a decade of baby-sitting, and, for the most part, it means training in the right answers. It is a commonplace that students can go through years of a good school curriculum without experiencing an iota of intellectual excitement. F.J.E. Woodbridge warned us, more than a half-century ago, to minimize the emphasis on education as "a preparation for life." It is better, he said, to think of it as "a discipline in present excellence."

The first consideration, then, that imposes itself when we try to clarify ourselves about the meaning of the discussion procedure is the role of this procedure in fostering ideational awareness and in dissipating the machine-like conception of query. Since it concerns the student as person and not simply as registrant in good standing, it cannot

possibly be limited to the first classroom hours. Ideational sensibility does not arrive in the form of sudden illumination, and students already endowed need to be sustained and fed. Now in the formal presentation (the "lecture"), as we ordinarily understand it, a product is transmitted. In the discussion, a product is established. Quantitatively speaking, "more" can be transmitted by presentation or exposition than can be established by discussion. But more can be assimilated of what is established than of what is transmitted. In both cases, a subject matter engages the action and attention of a certain number of people. In the lecture the wheels have been greased, the mechanism operates, and the product is inherited, God willing. In the discussion the product is necessarily earned, through halting personal labor. By the standards of social efficiency, one method appears to be rational and fluid; the other, primitive, wasteful, circuitous. But this is the crux of the matter. Ideational awareness in students requires precisely the perception on their part that there is no analogy whatever between entrepreneurial productivity and the productivity of query.

The relative merits of the lecture and the discussion depend in part on the conditions of their fulfillment: most obviously, on who is lecturing and who is being lectured to, on who is guiding the discussion and who is present in the discussion. But, plainly, there are properties intrinsic to each procedure considered as a situation. I have refrained from employing a common pair of terms, to the effect that lecturing entails "passivity" and discussion "activity" on the part of the student. Postponing for a while the question whether this account is just, it should be clear that there is no virtue at all in mere activity and that it is often wise to be passive. Everyone knows that unmitigated activity is a disease of the times contagious to the school. What is important in any procedure is the type of activity, the circumstances of passivity, involved. It is therefore in the total character and purpose of a method of teaching that its significance is to be found. If the discussion method is superior to the lecture method, this is not because of its degree of activity but because the establishment of a product of query by students is more fundamental to the deepening of their powers than their acceptance of such a product, and because the assimilation of ideas is more important than the compilation of ideas. I am aware that some champions of discussion might favor "manipulation of ideas" instead of assimilation, and, in general, I should agree to the equal suitability of the term; but, having presupposed its meaning in the notion of "establishing" a product, I prefer here to lay stress on the distinctive effect of discussion and to return later to the question of "activity" in general.

The term "discussion", occurring in a variety of contexts, carries a variety of associations. Notwithstanding their own practice, a great many teachers as well as students still labor under the idea that the lecture is the normal mode of academic communication and that the discussion is the anomalous mode, introduced not primarily to subserve query but primarily to promote "democracy" or to gener-

ate fraternal feeling. It is important, therefore, in determining what classroom discussion is, to determine what it is not. First of all, it is simply not true that "discussion is discussion" regardless of its conditions. Classroom discussion is a continuing enterprise, with a content that is sequential, and above all, cumulative. The members of a social club, who discuss what their luncheon speaker has told them about traffic deaths, religion, or an African safari, bring to the meeting no moral commitment toward query. They come with no substantive preparation. Unlike students, they have no responsibility for the framing of ideas. They are present to be entertained, to evince interest in the world about them, to be "stimulated" a little, to be "civic-minded." They are inherently distrustful of the abstract, of the effort to generalize, of "big words." The club discussion is a discrete occasion of comradeship. The classroom discussion is a persisting community of query.

There are many people who are inclined to belittle sharp distinctions between the different circumstances of discussion. Even those who do have a strong sense of the uniqueness of the classroom often belie it in practice. For example, the typical observer of another school's curriculum, having received permission to visit classes, goes to one hour of discussion in the social studies course, perhaps another hour of discussion in the mathematics course, and departs. I have often insisted upon greater hospitality than a visitor is prepared to receive, not merely because casual observation is absurdly unrepresentative, but because false perspective can give the air of travesty to an hour of labor. The individual discussion is part of a course; it presupposes products earlier achieved, evolving interests, and future obligations. It is not a one-act play giving way to another on the morrow. The specific techniques and procedures can vary greatly from day to day. To the one-hour observer (the largest species) a discussion can seem excessively narrow in scope, excessively broad in scope, or well-nigh unintelligible.

CONVERSATION AS AN UNREHEARSED INTELLECTUAL ADVENTURE.

As civilized human 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 forest 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. Of course there is argument and inquiry and information, but wherever these are profitable they are recognized as passages in this conversation... Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where the winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis; it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure.... 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.

—Michael Oakeshott, in "Poetry as a Voice in the Conversation of Mankind," *Rationalism in Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), pp. 198-199.

THE TEACHER AS A THINKING MODEL

"What and how much do children know about what a teacher thinks? It is inevitable that children will know something about how a teacher thinks, how much depending on the teacher. I have never heard anyone argue that a teacher is not a model for children of how one should think and act. It is not a matter of should a teacher be a model but rather that he is a model.... The point I wish to emphasize is that it appears that children know relatively little about how a teacher thinks about the classroom, that is, what he takes into account, the alternatives he thinks about, the things that puzzle him about children and about learning, what he does when he is not sure of what he should do, how he feels when he does something wrong — there is quite a bit that goes on in a teacher's head that is never made public to children.... [T]here is a good deal of anecdotal evidence strongly indicating that the more a teacher can make his own thinking public and subject for discussion — in the same way one expects of children — the more interesting and stimulating does the classroom become for students.... If my experience with school children — in fact, with all levels of students, from elementary through graduate school — is any guide, that large part of a teacher's "thinking about thinking", which is never made public, is precisely what the children are interested in and excited by on those rare occasions when it becomes public."

— From Seymour B. Sarason, *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971) pp. 185-187.

I should not dwell on the differentia of discussion, were it not for certain additional facts: (a) some people distrust discussion because they think it cannot be other than a loose form of learning; (b) others, who may actually prize discussion, consider it a charitable or hospitable form of learning; and (c) most non-educators think of the classroom as the "immature" stage of discussion, to be distinguished from the plain-spoken sessions of men of affairs. The average citizen, thoroughly unaware of his alienation from query, is anything but defensive. He thinks condescendingly of "kids at school": kids are kids and schoolteachers are schoolteachers. Kids train for adulthood. Men of affairs, having obviated or superseded the jargon of the books, talk about reality. The educator can do little about disenchanting fellow-citizens. He can do a great deal about seeing to it that the cultural myth does not infiltrate the school and take possession of his own soul. The simplest way to paralyze students is to regard them as kids on trial and not as earnest inquirers. I take it that the moral relation between the teacher and the students in the classroom is as much an ingredient of the discussion process as the discourse itself is. Quite apart from the attitudes of individual teachers, there are ways in which the school as such may reflect lay standards and perpetuate infantilism. A program which asks children to study materials of classic stature and then makes the newspapers or T.V. panels the basis of its own discussions is faithfully deferring to the cultural fable about the passage from kidhood to adulthood. The academic community cannot possibly snub the materials of public communication: they are indispensable. But so are breathing and sleeping, getting haircuts and buying groceries. Discussion in school is a costly process. If it cannot penetrate the crust of common sense or transcend the particularities of gossip, it is a wasteful luxury and a miserable failure.

The contentions embodied in a and b can be dealt with implicitly by various considerations. In referring to discussion as community of query and as committed to the establishment of a product, I do not mean to romanticize the process or to overestimate the extent of its accomplishments. The classroom never will be the scene of grandiose research or of systematic thought. As anyone who has spent any time in it knows, the talk is not consistently inspiring and can sometimes be dispiriting. Yet it can engender values truer to the spirit of free speculation than any other instance of community, within or without the academic world. The ingenuousness, the insight, the mad spontaneity of children discussing fairness or friendship or personal identity is like nothing else in the realm of discourse. It may not be the peak of invention, but it is very much the beginning of query. Given sufficiently challenging fare, accorded a status of reasonable equality within the confines of the classroom, students have begun the revolution of awareness. To establish a product is in itself a very modest process. It implies, of course, not the exhaustion of a subject but progress in the ascertainment of complexities. The classroom discussion is as different from the "bull session" as it is from the club luncheon, the T.V. panel, or the town meeting. Profitable and necessary as the informal gabfest may be, it is no ideal for the classroom, where economy and the sense of reflective order are the partners of exuberance.

No doubt there are as many conceptions of the actual conduct of discussion as there are practitioners of the method. I gather, both from direct observation and from the testimony of colleagues at various institutions, that practice ranges all the way from the rigorous specification of classroom norms to utter chaos. In between are to be found meetings like those of the Society of Friends, lectures to small groups in small rooms, and hour-long interrogation of students in alphabetical order. I am myself a little suspicious of strict canons for the "art of teaching" or of legislation as to what is or is not authentic discussion. On the other hand, since certain aims and values in a school are of greater importance than others, it seems to me that such aims and values are what any discussion ought to subserve. The view that no aims whatever can be specified as guides and that the values of learning are unpredictable or fortuitous may not be exactly nihilistic, but it questions the very existence of organization in learning. If, then, the actualization of the student's powers for query and the widening of his or her imagination are the values at which academic learning aims — naturally there are other values intellectual and moral of the total school experience — these are the guideposts for the conduct of discussion. One can scarcely take exception to any particular discussion technique if it does promote these values. Whether all current techniques do, in fact, promote them and whether the views on which these techniques are based have been carefully weighed, I rather doubt.

Consider, for instance, the view that a discussion should be characterized by the widest possible participation of students. Some years ago a visitor from the West Coast attended a class of mine. At the end of the hour he came

up and congratulated me on the number of students who had taken part, specifying the percentage to the first decimal place. When I told him that the day before only four or five students had carried the burden, his response was that not every hour could be a "good" one. And when I expressed the feeling that the earlier hour had been the better discussion, with greater benefit to the group, he smiled as though I had uttered a paradox. He had not paid much attention to the lines of argument and could not appraise the substance of anyone's contribution, but had occupied himself with computations about the number of times students spoke, the number of times they signified willingness to speak, the number of times they looked out of the window, and the number of doodlers among them. I do not know how many exponents of the discussion method find such criteria significant. I do know that several of my colleagues express a sense of defeat when only a small number of students speak during a discussion hour.

Among other questions, we are back to that of "activity" and "passivity." All things considered, wide participation is an index of vitality in the discussion, and participation itself is a symptom of intellectual energy in the participant. Yet if the ends of discussion are to be kept in view, the quality of the talk is more important than its quantity, and it is in the teacher's discretion whether at a given time it is of greater value to students to ruminate on the argument or to help build it. Neither pedagogical maxims nor an unseen hand can replace the variable, but ever responsive, judgment of the teacher. I suppose it would be generally acknowledged that the dialogues of Plato are pretty good "discussions." Yet the merit of these discussions does not depend on the number of participants, and in most of them one speaker dominates. The quantitative emphasis goes hand in hand with what might be called a therapeutic conception of discussion. It is sometimes contended that, since a school exists primarily to help students, it is good for them to "blow off steam" and good for them to acquire the responsibilities of communal participation. To this there are two main answers. First, a school does indeed exist to help students; but some conceptions of help are in effect the very reverse. None is of greater disservice to students than that which prescribes indiscriminately for their welfare, lumping together the functions of the dormitory, the advisory interview, the front office, and the classroom. It is good for students to blow off steam, even in the classroom — but occasionally, not principally. In the classroom there are other values which take precedence. The desirable degree of participation in discussion varies with the particular subject, the extent and nature of the background reading, the ability of students to discern what is going on, the psychological readiness of students, and a host of other factors. Since participating can mean raising questions as well as expressing viewpoints, a large number of participants is a fact which, taken by itself, signifies nothing.

Second, so far as the individual student is concerned, not the group, "participation" in the discussion does not necessarily take the form of oral activity. Every class exhibits wide differences in the emotional makeup of its members, and the shy, reticent, or modest student may profit greatly

THE RELEVANCE OF DIALOGUE

Entering the culture is perhaps most readily done by entering a dialogue with a more experienced member of it. Perhaps one way in which we might reconsider the issue of teacher training is to give the teacher training in the skills of dialogue — how to discuss a subject with a beginner. There is a Russian proverb to the effect that one understands only after one has discussed. There are doubtless many ways in which a human being can serve as a vicar of the culture, helping a child to understand its points of view and the nature of its knowledge. But I dare say that few are so potentially powerful as participating in dialogue. Professor Jan Smedslund, at Oslo, has recently remarked on our failure to recognize that even in the domains of formal reasoning, logic, and mathematics, the social context of discussion can be shown to be crucial.... One of the most crucial ways in which a culture provides aid in intellectual growth is through a dialogue between the more experienced and the less experienced, providing a means for the internalization of dialogue in thought. The courtesy of conversation may be the major ingredient in the courtesy of teaching.

—Jerome Bruner, "The Relevance of Education," (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1971), pp. 106-107.

from discussion by others, even as the witnesses did in the Socratic conversations. Neither direct coercion nor coercive expectation is a technique becoming to teachers who wish to identify with the minds and needs of their students. The student who participates through reflective activity alone is not shirking the collaborative obligation of the group as the chronic absentee is. Such students are, as it were, creative auditors in the community of query. The problem of self-confidence is one that they must solve for themselves and the teacher can help by lifting from them the tension that comes with external pressure. The "responsibilities of communal participation" must not, therefore, be construed as a yoke; they can be fulfilled in more than one way. It is a positive good, not a necessary evil, that a class should be diversified. Numerically speaking, a discussion group can be too small. And it does not make sense to value diversity without respecting the human differences it implies.

A key distinction between the expository and discussion situations emerges at this point. It is possible for the student's intellectual activity to be as great in a lecture as in a discussion. Between the auditor of a formal presentation and the silent member of the discussion group there is no basic difference — so far as energy and movement of thought is concerned. Moreover, the skilled expositor can anticipate typical stumbling blocks in student understanding and deal with them by judicious restatement. Nevertheless, there is one thing that the formal presentation cannot do. It cannot reproduce the conditions of actual query. The silent student in the discussion, fully as much as the vocal one, witnesses and experiences the manipulation of subject matter from its initial circumstances. He or she observes pitfalls as they occur in student probing and not merely as they are formulated in the more finished perspective of a formal exposition. Such students experi-

WHAT PHILOSOPHY DOES

"A philosopher's genius lies not in his giving one new answer to one old question, but in his transforming all the questions. He gives mankind a different air to breathe. But the differences that he makes are as hard to describe as the differences made by growing up. The adolescent cannot realise what these changes will be like; the adult cannot recollect what they had been like."

—Gilbert Ryle, "Hume", *Collected Papers*, Vol. 1 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), p. 160. Reprinted, in English translation, from the original French in "Les Philosophes Celebres" edited by M. Merleau-Ponty in 1956.

ence the natural history of query sometimes with their guts as well as with their intellects. The expositor can re-enact problematic experience dramatically; but in discussion the student is party to the original. Perhaps the most important consideration of all is that in the discussion the teacher has the opportunity to do all that the formal expositor does, and with more direct awareness of student needs. Teachers, too, can dramatize ideas, introduce factual information, prepare the ground, and clear the ground. But they can do these things in their urgency as well as by design, in the same way that they can answer questions as well as anticipate them. Thus in the discussion, not only is a product established collaboratively; it is experienced in its life-cycle as well as in its consummation.

It may be clear now wherein lies the error also of another group of teachers who stoutly insist that discussion should be wholly a student affair, with a minimum of contribution by the instructor. As the typical expositor places too much emphasis on the product and too little on the process, they place too much on the process and too little on the product. They contend that it is not the business of children's discussion to reach conclusions; that for students the experience of learning is far more important than the concoction of half-baked results. This school of thought, though not identical with that which wishes to widen participation at all costs, overlaps with it. It certainly must be conceded that half-baked results, if mistaken for what they are not, can be worse than no results at all. And I think it must be conceded also that, if a choice had to be made, the process of learning might merit more emphasis than the product. But the products of classroom discussion do not have to be half-baked in order to be **results**, and a choice between the product and the process does not have to be made in a **discussion**. Two simple confusions are imbedded in the approach of this school. One is between a product of query and a conclusion of query; the other is between a definitive conclusion and a functional or provisional conclusion.

We have agreed that students cannot aim at authoritative termini. Where we can speak of a conclusion at all, it may be developed only after many hours, and then with qualifications befitting the circumstances. But, regardless of this, a product is inevitably established in any given hour of discussion. For the product need not take the form of an assertive conclusion. It may be an enumeration of possible views, or a fuller definition of a problem, or a growth of appreciative awareness. It may be more of an envisioning

or of an exhibiting than of an affirming. The product is the concrete achievement of the hour — this is the language of students themselves. Students may have no right to demand final answers, but they certainly have a right to expect some sense of intellectual motion or some feeling of discernment.

Those who would remove the teacher as much as possible from overt participation cannot evade either the nonsense or the pathos of the consequences. Strictly, "as much as possible" means the total disappearance of the teacher and the replacement of the class by the bull session. Should the teacher be a patrolman keeping physical order? Or a purely formal logician, interrupting to detect inconsistency in argument? Or a parliamentary chairman, democratically distributing opportunities to speak? Or a mere representative of the school, symbolizing the sponsor of the discussion? Or a silent judge, meditating future rewards and penalties to the performers? Or an enigmatic contriver of puzzles, throwing out "hints"? Or "one of the boys," making himself as stupid as possible in order to spur them on? No doubt it is possible for a teacher so to dominate the proceedings as to terrorize or stultify students into total non-participation. But I am assuming throughout that when we speak of the "lecturer" and the "leader of discussion," we mean individuals representative of the respective methods and sufficient in reasonableness to permit comparison of these methods. By "discussion" we cannot possibly mean "tyrannical lecture."

How can teachers be the midwives of ideas if they merely look on at the dubious birth of such ideas? To legislate that they deliberately suppress their possible contributions to the discussion is to suppose them less than human or less than teachers — or less than responsible. If they are concerned with promoting awareness and not just encouraging speeches, they can no more refrain from contributing themselves than from permitting the best of their students to contribute. Rigid prescriptions of just how much teachers should talk at one stretch or what the intervals should be between their comments convert the discussion from an instance of learning into an exercise or a rite. Withdrawing them from the group is like withdrawing the books from the library or tearing out the odd-numbered pages in order to improve the guessing power of the students. Of course, teachers may often contribute injudiciously. But "contributing" and "contributing injudiciously" are no more synonymous than "teacher" and "unskilled teacher." It is possible for teachers to utilize their cognitive authority without flaunting it or to be periodically authoritative without ever being authoritarian. The fact of the matter is that they have to be not only positive contributors but exemplars of discussion. And if they are not, then to that extent the formal expository method is the superior method.

Having mentioned one great student of education, Woodbridge, it would hardly do to overlook his colleague Dewey, who, by some strange quirk of history, is often invoked to support, and is supposed even to have developed, the conception of the quiescent teacher. As Dewey puts it, on the contrary:

There is no spontaneous germination in the mental life. If [the student] does not get the suggestion from the teacher, he gets it from somebody or something . . . The implication that the teacher is the one and only person who has no "individuality" or "freedom" to "express" would be funny if it were not so sad in its outworkings. And his contribution, given the conditions stated, will presumably do more to getting something started which will really secure and express the development of strictly individual capacities than will suggestions springing from uncontrolled haphazard sources. The point is also worth dwelling upon that the method of leaving the response entirely to pupils, the teacher supplying, in the language of the day, only the "stimuli", misconceives the nature of thinking.¹

A notorious pitfall of the discussion method is the danger that a thin line often separates discussion from pure rhetoric. But this is a controllable circumstance. Innumerable threats are always present, such as unco-operative or rebellious student personalities, and the temptations of self-aggrandizement. None of these is an objection to the practice of discussion. The thin line is no thinner than that between listening to a lecture and sleeping at a lecture. A more serious pitfall, I think, lurks in the now widely held view that as much attention should be given in discussion to "form" as to "content," to the use of language as to the development of ideas; that, indeed, the improvement of expression and the articulation of ideas are one and inseparable. I am by no means a dissenter from the ideal which underlies this contention. A standard which holds for the teacher should hold for the student. One of the indisputable virtues of the discussion method is the experience it provides of the travail of formulation and of the test whether opinions which seem intuitively sound can bear the light of day.

Nevertheless, I am wary of any emphasis on the correlative status of language and ideas which does not realize its qualifying conditions. Some ideas, of our students no less than of our colleagues, resist conventional formulation, and we are too prone to insist on what turns out to be an oversimplification or an abortive version. By sanctifying the requirement of overt expression or of coherency, we can as easily smother a deep idea as expose a vapid one, and get to prize rapidity of response rather than thoroughness. It seems to me that excessively conventional thinking in the classroom is a much greater danger than slovenly expression. The latter is in no sense to be condoned as an end, but sometimes it may have to be tolerated as one stage in a means. One of the maladies endemic to this generation of scholars is an impatience with "unclear" speculation. The cries of "metaphysical" and "obscure" fly thick and fast, as though any sincere thinker were ever deliberately obscure or as though all metaphysics necessarily treated of the fantasies that positivists have in mind. It is common knowledge that many of the best students, whose written performances can be impressively coherent, have trouble in oral discussion. As often as not, this is the consequence of their being confronted at one and the same time with many more ramifications of an idea than are average students. Students who are hesitant to volunteer in discussion are frequently grappling with more than they can readily formulate. When to encourage them to share their wealth and when to let them work through their ideas is a perennial problem. I am disposed habitually to trust their judg-

ment more than my own. Generally speaking, if we would curb the glib student enthralled by the sound of his or her own voice, we might well be patient with the student who refuses to be glib and who is unable to be clear. With those teachers who construe "expression" primarily in terms of diction or grammatical niceties and who would interrupt a discussion to expose lapses, I have no sympathy whatever. Where a problem of this kind exists, it cannot be dealt with *ad hoc*. The best basis of satisfactory speech habits in the student is the continuing example set by the books he reads and by the teacher in action.

Continuous discussion, then, appears to be the superior mode of learning, when it is intensified by an imaginative teacher and supported by a powerful reading program. Sustained discussion has, if you will, an openness that the lecture cannot have, and a persistent promise as an avenue of discovery for the student and as an instrument of perception for the teacher.

Like all values, discussion is a value for persons. The most immediate aspects of a value do not, of course, always coincide with its most fundamental aspects. For the teacher, discussion is one of the great reminders of fallibility. And, like all values for the student, it is not separable from other values which condition and environ it. It can barely survive in effective form without good concomitant reading or without the co-operativeness of the teacher outside the classroom. The fact that it needs to be distinguished sharply from other school functions does not mean that it lacks connection with them. The community of discussion and other forms of academic community contain the same persons, who need to know one another as inquirers no less than as companions and contemporaries. At its lowest ebb, discussion is simply one more cultural ceremony; at its best, it is a force in the total constitution of the student. Too often this force is dissipated by the pressures and currents of the student's later life. Still it is imperative, academically, to do costly labor for small social fruits and to remember that even the student who has forgotten almost everything may now and then, from an influence remote to him, perceive the moral power of query.

Notes

1. *Intelligence in the Modern World*, ed. J. Ratner (New York: Modern Library, 1939), pp. 624-25.

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