

Philippe Augier

THE SOVEREIGN CITIZEN

Education
for
democracy



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UNESCO

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NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

Can democracy be taught? If it can, what should be the objectives and content of such education? Where and how should it be dispensed? How is it possible to educate the public while fostering a critical approach and preserving cultural identities? These are the questions Philippe Augier raises in this book which is intended not only for those involved in education but for all who are concerned to promote democratic action, respect for human rights and peace between nations.

After studying philosophy at the Sorbonne, Philippe Augier taught in South-East Asia and took a particular interest in the renewal of classic teaching methods. Returning to France, he became a journalist, specializing in international relations and the problems of communication. Later, as an international civil servant in Brussels, he lectured at universities in Europe, North America and Asia, and contributed to a number of journals dealing with diplomatic and cultural matters. He is involved in the process of forming closer links between institutes and research centres in the East and the West.

Philippe Augier is also a novelist (*Les Objets trouvés*, *La Drache*) and an essayist (*Le Désir du non-être*, *Les Relations transatlantiques*).

INTRODUCTION

Six academics in search of democracy

Once upon a time six academics from around the world – each one a scholar, skilled and dedicated in his own way – came together to compare their experiences and thoughts, and to exchange views on the best way of teaching a subject which, far from being “conventional” like mathematics or geography, appeared not even to lend itself to being taught: democracy. This being so, who could aspire to teach “democracy”?

All these intellectuals believed democracy to be a universal system of values, and the most appropriate basis for co-existence in order that human beings might gradually stop behaving like savages to their neighbours, and that nations, races and classes might finally live in peace, if not in harmony. All of them considered that the patterns of democratic behaviour were fashioned first in schools, colleges and universities. Young boys and girls ought to be introduced to the values of tolerance, respect for their fellows, equality, the fundamental rights common to all human beings, and of course liberty, before it was too late; in other words before they were swallowed up and perverted by social groups or political interests, lay or religious ideologies, professional or family pressures, career plans, economic challenges or simply the problems of daily survival. Or, to put it in another way, before the instincts for self-preservation and for extending one’s territory, common to all living species, filled

that space in people's minds which should be reserved for the peculiarly human awareness of belonging to a world community in which frontiers are no more than symbolic. If humanity, in the natural order of things, was to stand out by its ability to excel itself and organize itself in a society, it was important above all to make it aware that it had a conscience.

They believed that childhood was the time to teach the lessons that the tribe did not constitute the entire universe; that the neighbour was not necessarily an enemy to be overcome; that no people had been chosen by God more than any other; that the wealthy should, in the general interest, share their resources and their know-how with the poor; that kings and heads of state were made in the same way as peasants or workers and hence had the same needs and constraints; that no religion was more respectable than any other; that no one individual, even when supported by a clan, clique or interest group could with impunity enslave millions of others; that one's skin colour, sex, level of education or annual income should no longer be a reason for discrimination – all in principle being equal under the law, all having the same importance and the same duties towards their fellows.

A noble task, and noble ideals for our six teacher-democrats! But how to move on?

How to get children at school to see that the puny or timid child who, in the playground, prefers to play marbles or simply wander about, has as many rights – as much existence – as the extraverted and active child who takes up the whole schoolyard with a game of football? How to explain to the child who has a richer father than his neighbour, or has a lighter skin, that once in school they are absolutely equal?

At high school, how to get the best students into the habit of not putting down those who are less brilliant, and how to teach them all that the microcosm of society represented by the class prefigures all the other forms of social life they will subsequently get to know? Is the student who sits at the back of the room, looking through the window at the wind in the trees, inferior – in human terms – to the student in the front row who has an answer for everything?

Finally, at the university, how should the students be readied to take an active part in sustaining democracy where it is already familiar, in consolidating it wherever it is still shaky, and introducing it where it does not yet exist? Will the degree student, after graduation, be tempted to manipulate the lives of the less educated for his or her own benefit in order to satisfy a thirst for power? Or, on the other hand, will he or she try to use his knowledge to improve the status of all?

Our scholars discussed the matter.

However, in looking into appropriate teaching methods, it was essential first to agree on a definition of democracy.

The first scholar, an eminent British teacher in a private school, began the discussion thus: "As far as I am concerned, I teach each of my pupils individually that the fundamentals of democracy are a critical faculty and a questioning attitude. Like John Stuart Mill, I emphasise the importance of the independence of the individual and I show that the will of the majority can often be tyrannical".

The second, an educational adviser reigning over the Paris *hautes écoles*, said: "Democracy can only be achieved in a law-abiding state, where the laws emanate from popular sovereignty and where human rights, as defined in the 1789 Declaration and then by that of 1948, are respected

as a frame of reference. We teach these declarations to our children from the age of 12”.

The third, an erudite Muscovite, remarked: “For a very long time in our country, curricula have been imposed in an authoritarian manner by the school councils, which consist of students, teachers, parents and representatives of local authorities. We are now introducing new structures whereby school functioning will not be directed from above. But democracy will cost dear and take time”.

The fourth, an historian from North Africa, said: “The Western world has come up with a hegemonistic form of reasoning and so, in the name of secularity, has blanked out religions, other cultures and other philosophies – in brief, everything that was not its own. Democracy means restoring equilibrium to the teaching of history – all histories and of all peoples”.

It was then the turn of the fifth, an African teacher, who explained: “Teaching of democracy means first and foremost a roof for my school and books for my children. But in any case young people here have always been brought up in a democratic system: “Our decisions have been taken for thousands of years through the village palaver”.

“As far as I’m concerned,” said the sixth, a Brazilian researcher, “I exercise my democracy in the streets, where so many children who have not had the opportunity to go to school live and grow up. Democracy also begins with social action.”

Has the philosophy of enlightenment been dimmed?

The academics expounded at length.

Those from the West, confident in their old democratic traditions, showed how it could be done, quoted legislation, referred to international resolutions and formulated universal concepts. However, despite their assurance, they could not conceal a degree of concern about the erosion of attitudes and convictions in their own countries: the great thinkers had lived, passed on and not been replaced. One looked for a Montaigne or a Goethe in philosophy and ethics: one found journalists and pop singers. Moreover, the secular faith which had supplanted religious conviction no longer worked. The political class itself, being short on conviction, provided the spectacle of being overly concerned with deal-making and opportunism. The media were now taking over from governments. Children were educated in business practices rather than in ethics. Even worse, there was war at the very gates of democracy's bastion. Sarajevo, which had already ignited the world in 1914, was, like virtually all the former Yugoslavia, the theatre of a conflict whose barbarism matched that of the tribal, religious and racial wars of the third world, which the Western powers hastened to condemn. The countries of Europe, in no hurry to unite and incapable of intervening for the defence of democracy on the territory of an immediate neighbour, showed all the signs of disarray. Was it lack of political will, selfishness or fear? Finally, the old demons of racism and nationalism, which everyone thought had gone forever, could again be seen raising their heads.

The Eastern countries were no less circumspect: the formidable events which in the space of a few months had swung central Europe and an immense area of Europe and Asia from totalitarianism to liberalism or, if you like, from popular democracy to democracy *per se*, should

have generated an unprecedented surge of enthusiasm, an infinity of initiatives, a redistribution of jobs, and general well-being. However, as the Moscow teacher put it: "The dogs are now entitled to bark, but there's nothing left in their bowls". Here again, nationalism reared its head; organized crime developed rapidly; conflict, the black market and trafficking all contributed to the disorganization of the economies.

The former USSR and its satellites were looking for democratic models: all the West could send were business people looking for new markets. After so many years spent under the eye of Big Brother, these countries discovered the hidden face of the Eldorado they had dreamed about. Notwithstanding, the churches were full again. Hope changed its focus and the traditions thought lost rose again from the ashes.

The countries of the South were more divided. Some sought the democratic route and, putting rancour aside, took the Western world as the example to follow. They quoted Montesquieu, Rousseau, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and pointed to the blessings of an education in civics. Paradoxically, all they had retained from colonialism was the cult of reason, and they were amazed to see it now blow up in the faces of the old occupiers.

The others believed that their own modes of co-existence, their own culture and their own religion had forged ancestral patterns of democratic behaviour and that there was no need to rely on imported systems. They pointed, not without acrimony, to the fact that certain rich countries had made co-operation (i.e., economic aid to the poorest in return for keeping their old spheres of influence) dependent upon good practices, defined according to their criteria, being universally respected. They were

worried about the egocentric West and the good democratic conscience that accompanied it.

Others regarded with some perplexity the “post-modernist” changes in the West which, having long shown the way, now turned like a weathercock to point out another. The world had changed: the dangerous equilibrium sustained by the two major powers since the 1950s had given way to the “new world order” and nobody knew – or dared to say – who would benefit.

Many players in the international orchestra found that the conductor had become far too imperious and arrogant, and they persisted in believing that harmony came first from the variety and multiplicity of sounds. It was well known that the sixth violin, the piccolo or the triangle, however modest their roles, could easily turn the symphony to cacophony. Of course one had to admit that the brass sounded louder than the mandolins, that the oud was drowned by the trumpets of Jericho and that the koto, despite its soft accents, was ubiquitous.

Democracy, in the instrumental sense, left something to be desired. This was the sad conclusion of our teacher-democrats.

Nevertheless, precisely by facing up to their differences, they all agreed with the fact that “although the form, scope and intensity of democratic processes differed from Latin America to Africa to Europe to Asia, they were sufficiently similar to indicate a global phenomenon” – as pointed out by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in *An Agenda for Peace*. Beyond cultural and religious specificities, beyond regional problems and economic rivalry, there were signs of a major movement, which revealed, for the first time in history, the outlines of a certain form of world harmony. It was

essential not to let this opportunity pass by. It was essential not to allow the world economy – the establishment of a global supermarket from which everyone would obtain supplies according to the extent of their alignment with new standards drawn up by a very few individuals, a criterion which would determine their purchasing power – to win the day over the values that were making timid progress: the right to be different, the learning of good citizenship in an increasingly wide community, justice, social responsibility, equality and tolerance.

For this purpose, the international institutions proved to be incomparable. Amongst these, UNESCO had a major role to play in promoting peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms. It provided a forum for exchanges and discussion to encourage the democratic transitions, a forum where it was possible, through educational choice, to identify prospects for practical action, acceptable to all, that would change behaviour patterns, with no fear of being accused of careerism, political manoeuvring or manipulation. Just when many people feared that the philosophy of enlightenment had become severely dimmed, UNESCO was able to help light the way for young minds.

Responding to countries' requests

It was in the spirit of this allegory about six imaginary teachers that in November 1992 UNESCO organized an International Forum on Education for Democracy in Tunis, which, following the 1989 Yamoussoukro International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, the Montevideo International Conference on Democratic Culture and Development: towards the Third Millennium

in Latin America in 1990, and the 1991 Prague International Forum on Culture and Democracy, formed part of the dual process of thought and action defined by the Director-General, Federico Mayor: "An authentic democratic culture sees a synthesis of tolerance, good citizenship, education and the communication of ideas". This forum was the logical sequel to the previous conferences.

However, it has to be admitted that the role of the international organizations in these areas is not an easy one: they have to meet countries' expectations as regards education without getting involved in their prerogatives; helping to develop reasonable approaches to teaching, without offending the one or upsetting the other; getting each to accept that they do possess a monopoly of the democratic ideal and the way it should be taught; that in relative terms Lao Tseu is equivalent to Jean Jaurès, and Lord Keynes to an African witch doctor or a Bengali guru; that an Imam has as much to learn from a Jesuit as the Jesuit from him, so long as all of them spread the right message – i.e., the concepts of human dignity and fundamental human rights. Moreover it is important to point out that no international institution aspires to impose a philosophy or create democrats with the magic wand of education, but rather that education is the only possible option – so long as it is borne in mind that the democratic attitude, although more to the fore on the school benches than in retirement, is forged throughout a life, slowly, gradually, through daily experience.

Indeed, Federico Mayor has often stressed the fact that meetings such as those in Prague or Tunis were not arranged merely to perpetuate the great principles already inscribed in laws or the generous ideas of liberty and

equality on which everybody, in principle, is already agreed – those which are restated, repeated and chewed over in international meetings – but rather to look together for concrete answers to problems, to collect raw material and methodologies, compare each other's experience, exchange know-how and teaching techniques, all of which elements should result in a series of suggestions on the basis of which UNESCO could formulate, to the extent it is able, instruments to aid and support teachers around the world who are striving to develop the democratic idea.

In other words, the Organization is not supposed to be a mere meeting place for researchers, educators and academics, but the cultural arm of the United Nations, charged by the states themselves to provide concrete and effective help, to enhance knowledge of the world heritage – which is not only that of monuments and buildings, but also that of the fundamental common values: human rights, peace and freedoms.

Reason and force

The choice of the city of Tunis for arranging a conference on education for democracy, like that of Prague for the forum on "Culture and Democracy", was not a matter of chance.

It was a question of highlighting the historical plurality and geographical diversity of the roots of the democratic idea, the efforts of nations to determine their own future and the actions they take to teach their children how to fight peacefully for progress in democracy. Thus by the middle of the nineteenth century, the *Ahd El Aman* Charter expressed the will of the Tunisian people to be free of the

yoke of the Government of the Beys. Since that time, liberal ideas inspired by the French Revolution – a tragic irony of history which was to turn liberators into colonizers – and spread by the reformist movement, had sought to adapt the democratic system to the principles of Islam, which included the concepts of justice and political consultation. Later on, the “Destour” laws of 1920 and 1934 were aimed at a democratic constitution in which the state religion would in no way prevent the introduction of a system based upon the separation of the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

On the occasion of the International Forum on Education for Democracy, Federico Mayor presented the UNESCO Prize for the Teaching of Human Rights to Mr Hassib Ben Hammar, director of the Arab Institute for Human Rights. He declared: “I pay tribute to an institution based in Tunisia whose activities cover a much wider area”. One way of saluting the new deal in international relations.

The optimists see an empire of freedom emerging in the world. After 40 years of the terrifying nuclear balance of power which had reduced most countries to the role of spectators, they suddenly became actors themselves. Even as bit players, understudies or voice-overs, they could then expect that their voice would be heard. “But very few, added Federico Mayor, “were already prepared to assume their responsibilities in matters of education, environment, friendly relations, and peaceful and joyous co-existence with their fellows”. The stars remained at the front of the stage, which is what stars do. Many nations became accustomed to submitting and merely monitoring what was taking place; they must now themselves write down what ought to take place. Never having had the opportunity to do so – or at least not in contemporary history – they are

finding that it is a much more difficult process. An old bit player who becomes a leading performer overnight suffers much more from stage fright than a star who has hung on to the position for decades.

It is self-evident that peace has to be constructed in our minds through education and intellectual co-operation. However, behind these noble intentions, how many pressure groups, personal and collective interests, powerful desires sometimes masquerading as humanitarian or cultural concerns, have contributed to the exploitation of those who are still exploitable? At one time in the history of UNESCO, science and technology were described as particularly essential in forming human potential, in accordance with employment needs. This is probably true, but it is only one aspect of the Organization's mission, the main thrust being the diversification of knowledge based upon the free circulation of ideas throughout the world. The Organization is not an investment agency or a foundation busy collecting financial resources: these matters are others' responsibilities. But UNESCO does constitute a framework for freedom, plurality, intellectual and moral probity, one of the most effective one could wish for in the present conditions of international cohabitation, still and lastingly marked by ethnic, economic and social conflicts.

The former Yugoslavia in flames; the horn of Africa starving, and how many others; the Far East seeking to forget all those years of war; Indians and tribal groups sacrificed to the profit of the great landed estates with the multinationals laying waste enormous areas of countryside; vast migratory movements converging on Europe or the United States, often resulting in greater impoverishment of the migrants; peoples of the "scattered empire" violently returning to their old enmities; religious

communities tearing one another apart around the world, in other words almost everywhere ... indeed there is no doubt that spreading and promoting the democratic idea is not the easiest of tasks.

But optimism must prevail, because it is the essential prerequisite for the development of the spirit of good citizenship and the formation of independent social and cultural actors. This optimism is that of the international organizations, the non-governmental organizations and of all those who believe that sooner or later reason will prevail over force, that living in the diversity, complexity and recognition of the neighbour is the only way of achieving a just and perfect world community.

I

THE OBJECTIVES

Only the educated are free

Epictetus

Logically, any consideration of democracy begins with the observation that it is impossible to define or grasp the concept with any clarity or precision. Everybody knows this, although few admit it, and at any conference on the subject the first thing the participants must do is avoid becoming bogged down and reach agreement on a minimalist definition of democracy. Here it is always rewarding to look at the dictionaries: for the Robert, democracy is "a political doctrine according to which sovereignty should belong to every citizen". This is the most general definition, which any and everybody should be able to accept. We might note that *Larousse*, which gives the same definition, devoted two lines to democracy in its 1922 edition and ten lines in that published in 1993. A sign of the times? In any event it is clear that the people (from the Greek *demos*) rule (*kratein*). Montesquieu agrees: "When, in the Republic, the people as a whole have sovereign power, it is a democracy. However, he then points out, in the democracy the people are in certain respects the monarch; in certain others, they are the

subject".¹ This remark clearly shows that it is not enough to speak of democracy as a particular pattern of institutions or a political system: it must be regarded more generally as a moral requirement whose principles are common to all cultures, philosophies and religions.

If it is accepted that the human mind functions in more or less the same way in every climate and continent, and that humanity has formulated codes of conduct and systems of law that are fairly comparable with one another, then everyone can agree with this very general meaning.

However this immediately leads on to the first difficulty: this moral requirement cannot be defined in the abstract, because it is conditioned first by an unsatisfactory political and social situation – it is easy for anybody to identify and criticise, with the clear conscience of the moralist, those institutions or types of behaviour that are anti-democratic – and secondly by the desire for a better world which is yet to be invented. But although it is easy to denounce a dictator, a corrupt minister, a nepotistic employer or a cruel neighbour, it is much more difficult to demonstrate correct behaviour by example in order collectively to build a better world. Hence democracy is a continuous process of questioning, building, re-inventing and improving.

The examples of democracy in history are never more than moments in the democratic evolution, a movement which never stops. Consequently no particular concept of democracy can be held up as an example. That of the ancient Athenians is almost totally unrelated to that of the contemporary Anglo-Saxons, or that of the French revolutionaries or the utopian Jesuits of Paraguay, and even less that of the Marxist-Leninist theoreticians who speak of "democratic centralism". Incidentally, one may wonder

whether the concept of democracy can co-exist with that of centralism.

Since history is in perpetual motion, at a speed that varies in the different parts of the world – owing for example to geophysical and climatic parameters, agricultural and industrial resources, the extent to which a society is rooted in tradition, ethnic, intellectual and commercial isolation – the extent of democratic awareness naturally varies from nation to nation. Now that democracy has become an almost universal yardstick, each believes he or she has done better than the others. Everyone sees democracy at their own door: a door which is sometimes welcoming, sometimes barred.

The dream and the facts

It is significant to note that democratic behaviour is formed first through knowledge of other people. Indeed this basic condition becomes increasingly essential as the human race increases in size. The world, regarded as immense only 50 years ago, is shrinking daily. Unlike the universe, which is believed to be expanding, the earth we live on seems to be contracting. Sharing the wealth of the planet amongst several billion people immediately raises questions out of all proportion with those faced at the beginning of the century, when the Earth's population was only a few hundred million. The development of means of communication, transport facilities and the media, and the exponential growth of population all demonstrate an absolute need: that of living together.

The "other person", whom one has fought for thousands of years, against whom one has tried to protect one's

territory or whose wealth one has tried to appropriate, generates mistrust, suspicion, hostility and even hate. Like the animals, human beings fear whatever, in their eyes, represents a potential, intangible and unidentified – that is, uncontrolled – threat: whatever they do not understand. One would like the other person to be a copy of oneself, a more or less close relation. But his or her difference disturbs us and causes us to wonder about ourselves. As next door neighbour, he or she is perceived as an invader; as a business person, as a predator; of a different colour, as an active delinquent. If successful, he or she must be an impostor or a crook; if unsuccessful, a parasite.

The great migratory movements which, unlike the widely held view, are not a recent phenomenon, have left in the collective unconscious the profound and terrible traces of invasion, massacre and pillage. Tamerlane is still to Asia Minor what Cortes is to South America, Attila to Europe and Ghengis Khan to China. There are plenty of lesser, more recent examples, which we shall not list here.

But the other person differs according to whether he or she comes from the Antipodes or is a relation. Societies were once able to construct democratic systems precisely because their populations were so low. To quote Fustel de Coulanges: "In Athens, ranked even above the Senate, there was the assembly of the people. The assembly was the real sovereign and was convened by the chief officials (prytanes) or military leaders (strategus). The people were seated on stone benches ... people went up to the rostrum to speak ... Any man could speak, with no distinction as to wealth or profession"². It is much easier for a community of a few hundred or thousand individuals to organize itself on the basis of direct participation than it

is for a nation with a population of several million or an empire with several hundred million. This applies with even greater force to an entire species, forced by its rapid proliferation in a limited space to find new methods of co-existence. Today it is difficult to imagine all the citizens of any country taking their seats and speaking in a Senate or national assembly. Consequently other ways have to be found. And such ways raise considerable difficulties, for while the citizens of Athens knew one another personally, that is impossible for us today.

Propinquity, as we know, conditions behaviour. He who strolls through the thirty rooms of his country house or strides across his estate does not act in the same way as the man living in a two-room flat with his wife and six children. Similarly the man whose job causes him to criss-cross the world, negotiating one day in Tokyo, another in Buenos Aires, the following week in Dakar or Melbourne, does not have the same overall view of the human community as the one who has never been able to leave his village and regards the next town as the end of the world, that is to say, correlatively, all that is evil: the sphere of the unknown and of what is different.

The propinquity in question is no longer that of a small group of democrats charged with conducting the affairs of the country; it is that of all human beings, and is not between individuals but between countries. Thus one could say that in an ideal world the development of means of communication, increased mobility, and ethnic and social mixing should help people to know their neighbours better, and hence develop attitudes of tolerance. Paradoxically, one might even support the proposition that the growing world population should favour democratic behaviour, precisely at a time when it is essential

to reconsider the sharing of the earth's resources if chaos is not rapidly to ensue – that chaos which humankind has tried, and is still trying, with varying degrees of success, to convert into order.

Of course things do not really work like this.

For example if we consider the cities and regions that lay along the ancient Silk Road, one of the oldest lines of communication – which enabled the East and West to discover one another – one might well expect to find sound democratic attitudes, forged through the centuries by the passage of merchants carrying not only goods and food-stuffs but also traditions and cultures, so favouring mutual understanding and, thereby, tolerance.

Did this happen in fact? Has not the Central Empire not remained precisely that: the centre of the world? And Europe too? And America the same? Each and every one is at the centre of the world – except perhaps the astronauts who, as they see the continents pass beneath, are in a position to perceive their narrowness, the true relativity of the space filled by the different countries, bearing little relationship to all the forms of nationalism that exist.

“Let us mix up the nations: they will finish by understanding one another ...” Indeed. What became of America's generous dream: the “melting pot”? When the different races from around the world came to the New World, did they intermix, do they understand one another, do they accept one another? The fact of knowing one another better and of sharing, always in increasing numbers, the same territory is clearly not enough to transform a solitary being into a being of solidarity.

However, despite this pessimistic conclusion it is important to remain hopeful and we shall see that encouraging solutions do exist for the future.

Freedom, justice and prosperity

It is possible to discern three separate phases in the evolution of democracy:

- the phase during which democracy is related to the idea of freedom, and is reflected in the institutions in its basically political form;
- the phase where democracy is conceived as an instrument of justice as it spreads into social, professional and even family relationships;
- that where the citizen, released from inequalities under the law, aspires to the equitable distribution of prosperity.

1. As regards liberty, there is no longer any dispute about the principles of the Declaration of Human and Civic Rights, which encompass liberty, in general and symbolic terms it is true, as a prerogative inherent in every person, whereby he or she should be able to determine his or her own future. Every country that has a constitution includes these principles in it. Even dictators, or the most recent regimes having recourse to direct force, take great care to dress up the way in which they exercise power in the concepts of liberty and fundamental rights, principally under the pressure of the international community. However, liberty takes various forms. Somebody living in the favelas, or the shanty town suburbs which surround every great metropolis, enjoys the same constitutional liberty as a minister of justice or a director of a bank. No doubt because this is provided for in the Constitution.

International law, and most national law, affirm that the individual is free under the law. If he or she is to remain so, the exercise of the political function must be arranged in such a way that it can be controlled by the people as a whole. Consequently everybody can vote ... This is certainly a major victory for democracy, so long as the vote leads to progress and improvements in the general well-being, by electing the most competent and honest candidates.

Faced with this ambiguity, certain historians have invoked a subtle distinction between autonomous liberty – the absence of constraints, or physical and material independence – and participatory liberty, which associates the governed directly with the exercise of power in order to prevent this from imposing upon them a discretionary authority. “The democratic management of public affairs is neither simple nor natural. A study of its most formal expression, the vote, shows how slowly electors and elected, in the ancient democracies, have learned this difficult lesson whereby voting has acquired its importance and its force and thus strengthened the establishment of democracy. Nor is this the end of the story”.³

2. With regard to justice, the second phase in the evolution of democracy, the expectation of freedom replaces the notions of liberty and law. In an environment where inequalities and constraints prevail, the country or authority must embark on a sharing process. It is easy for a social class, political party or movement to believe that it should fly to the aid of moral principles and guarantee national integrity when this appears threatened. The temptation is considerable. This has led to many blunders, and to situations with liberty and justice abandoned

and the principles of human rights overturned, in the countries of the South, the East as well as in the West. Alexis de Tocqueville noted in his time that American society was more democratic than its governmental apparatus. And need we point to the communist epic where the original ambition of establishing a society of justice and equality resulted in even more arbitrary rule, injustice and inequality between citizens? In the Third World, how many liberators of the nation, driven by good intentions and suckled at the breast of the democratic *credo*, have become potentates or tyrants after a few years in power? And even today, in how many countries is it not better to exercise justice than to suffer it?

3. Finally we come to the third phase in the evolution of the democratic idea: prosperity. Once it is accepted that the concepts underlying human rights, respect for liberty and justice are, at the very least, actually written into the constitutions, with the social structures framed by laws that are in fact applied, then the next and probably essential step is liberation from all constraints. The economic situation of each individual, his or her purchasing power, and physical, material and spiritual dependence on a state, party, employer or community, lies at the heart of every form of oppression suffered. Here it is not enough for democracy to exist in law and social justice: the role of power must be transformed.

This power is now no longer expected merely to pass laws and to live in harmony with other countries on the basis of general and generous principles – and on paper; it is no longer expected merely to control poverty, where poverty exists, while guaranteeing the right to dignity. Dignity is perceived differently from a rickshaw saddle

than from the back of a limousine, differently on the dock-side from in a parliamentary chamber.

States are now expected to manage growth, ensure the prosperity of the greatest possible number, and share out world resources and access to work in the fairest possible manner.

Is this the ultimate, ideal stage of democracy? A utopia? Probably not. The development of scientific understanding, and the technical advances which stem from it, will fundamentally transform the often shaky equilibrium that exists between countries. On the one hand, in the rich countries, robotics and computers are throwing millions of people out of work; on the other hand, we know how to convert solar energy into electricity and algae into proteins.

This inescapable trend will not be to everybody's liking. But it is the essential prerequisite to restoring an equilibrium: instilling in some people the feeling that they will not always be deprived, helping them struggle for development, not through aid but through education; giving them back their confidence. To disseminate amongst others – those who are the true inventors of democracy and the masters of the sciences now changing the face of the planet – the conviction that showing the light to the world does not mean taking it over, enslaving the least well off, cutting down their forests and depleting their seas.

Showing the light means teaching without let-up, passing on knowledge, educating, opening hearts and minds to history as well as to technology, encouraging gifts and skills, helping each individual to progress by disseminating, as widely as possible, regardless of frontiers, the most recent scientific discoveries as well as the ancient bases

of philosophy and religion. For as we shall see, education cannot be limited to the transmission of knowledge merely in its form of action on matter and must necessarily be accompanied by a spiritual dimension, without which the human community would no longer be able to capitalise on that which sets it apart from the other species.

The behaviour patterns of democratic co-existence

Education begins with a proper understanding of the global problems of equilibrium between societies, problems which in the modern world are very largely subordinated to economic conditions. We said "in the modern world", but perhaps it would be preferable to go back in time to turn the bright light of scrutiny on the whole of history, indeed on all our common histories? Relationships based upon force are conditioned by access to wealth, either that of the area in which one is born and which one regards as one's own, or that of others, which one covets, or that of the richer area where one might have been born, perhaps merely at the other side of the river or the mountain. Surely such relationships – the great destroyers of the democratic ideal – have always been present at the outbreak of wars. Have not those living on the arid highlands been tempted, for thousands of years, to go down to enjoy the resources of the fertile plain? And those living on the plain: is their immediate response not to protect their orchard, their garden and their livestock, even to the extent of physically eliminating the new arrivals?

So if we want to put an end to these relationships based upon force which serve only to generate conflict –

ultimately damaging the winner as well as the loser since conflict, far from increasing the sum total of wealth, is diminishing – it is essential to teach the new generations that other types of relationship are possible. It is essential to teach democracy. It is essential to show the highland children and those from the plain that humanity is an entity and necessarily united, simply because in the long term there is no other choice.

Against this background, we shall try to list a few minimum requirements that democratic patterns of behaviour should satisfy:

- **active tolerance:** being capable of accepting that all have equal dignity and that opinions with which one does not necessarily agree are legitimate; acquiring general ideas about other cultures, religions and people in order thereby to learn to respect them. Active tolerance can be contrasted with passive tolerance, which involves merely distancing oneself from others or being indifferent to them and becoming self-centred, in sum a milder form of the ancestral and natural instinct to defend one's territory: others are entitled to live as they wish, think what they like, act differently, and believe in any God they please – so long as they stay at home;
- **widening the field of one's concerns:** in other words, looking beyond one's immediate environment, being curious about things other than one's family, district or community. Taking an interest in one's neighbour, the adjoining district, the neighbouring town, the next country, the other continents – taking an interest in one's fellows; and, which is more difficult, in those who are far off. Understanding that every local or regional event

has an impact on the planet as a whole, that nothing is free of charge, that a cause always has an effect, that a revolution in one country – even on the other side of the world – affects all other countries in a more or less direct way, just as a cloud of particles can travel round the earth after a nuclear explosion;

- **taking part in the life of society:** becoming aware that one holds a fragment of sovereignty, and using it. Conducting oneself as a complete citizen, concerned about life in one's country, respect for its institutions, social justice, and the morality of political life. Acting rather than submitting. Not yielding to the temptations of selfishness, self-centredness, scepticism and cynicism. Rather than saying "in any case the world will always be the same, the leaders will always be corrupt and the rich will always make the law" trying, to the extent that one's abilities allow, to change the world, to help select leaders of integrity and establish a more just society. In other words: assuming one's responsibilities in the strict sense.
- **harmonizing the interests of the individual and the community:** majority rule, the basis of democracy, should not permit the denial of minority interests. A party elected to power with 51% of the votes should never forget that 49% of the electors do not share its opinions. And even though a particular political grouping, religious or ideological community, corporation or interest group represents only an infinitesimal part of the social fabric, it should have free access to the means of expression and representation, commensurate with its size. This should apply, naturally, to the extent that

it does not threaten the equilibrium of the entire community through its extremism, collectivism, or fanaticism, all of which types of behaviour are prejudicial to the general interest, and would so threaten the basis of democracy and destabilise society through violent action. Here the idea of violence is taken in the psychological as well as the physical sense: misinformation campaigns, dogma, pressure deliberately exercised on children, adolescents and adults – men and women – group indoctrination and brainwashing through repetitive slogans are forms of violence wholly equivalent to physical and material constraints, and even more insidious.

These are some of the basic democratic behaviour patterns on which it should be possible for teachers in every country – rich or poor, in the North, the East or the South, to agree. Education for democracy involves passing on these values. In fact the creation – and persistence – of democracy result more from individual behaviour than from legislation. If the individual does not exercise his or her civic duties, or does not behave democratically in every sphere of activity, whether family, professional, associative or cultural, then what is left? “The main point of education, said Jacques Turgot, is to preach example”. There is no doubt that setting an example is worth more than passing on information in a didactic way. To a child aged ten or fifteen, the teacher’s traits and gestures, quickness to punish or concern to explain, ability to conceal impatience at the slowness of some pupils and to show enthusiasm at the speed of others, in encouraging the work of the entire class, count for infinitely more than all the knowledge he or she passes on.

Individual example has a special force, for a teacher as well as for a head of state. An adolescent disappointed in the behaviour of a teacher, who does not practise what he or she teaches, becomes the citizen disappointed in the behaviour of the president whose decisions contradict his or her professed beliefs.

- **Children** in contact with parents and teachers who behave as democrats, will naturally tend to adopt the same attitudes. Those who suffer from an autocratic father or an inconsistent teacher will have greater difficulty in conducting themselves in society. Later on, students will rejoice if they find that the influential people who teach them do not form part of the cliques and hold themselves aloof from the internecine quarrels which so often, around the world, corrode the universities. They will never forget a teacher who demonstrates an independent mind and a determination to teach the truth despite every pressure.
- **In working life**, emulation and equity could encourage democracy. But here, more than anywhere else, the struggle for survival, competition, and striving for power favour the re-emergence of the old patterns of savagery in a modern form. The reptilian brain is never completely overlaid.
- **With regard to the media**, any newspaper or television channel putting out unvarnished news that people were convinced was without political or commercial bias, could be an excellent vehicle for the democratic idea. Some do exist. But only a few. Who is to say which?

- Finally, the political class, so visible and under such scrutiny, will contribute more to introducing or reinforcing the democratic condition the more it follows the rules of the game in transparency and integrity. Everybody knows the risks of flaws, inadequacies and diversions to which institutions and people in public life are exposed. "The great vice of democracy", said Voltaire, "is like the Turkish fable of the dragon with many heads and the dragon with many tails. The many heads destroy one another and the many tails obey only one head which seeks to devour everything".⁴

Governance and the governed

It is clear therefore that democracy must not be either a simple political technique, a pleasure-producing society, or one in which the citizens are content merely to pick those who will take decisions in their name. The election process alone is not enough to resolve the problem of the harmonious and balanced co-existence of all the people. The elector is regarded as sovereign, but sovereign over what? Voters are given the possibility of electing a mayor, a member of parliament or a head of state: however, they are not asked what they want, but whom they want. One is allowed to divest oneself of some of one's duties and responsibilities towards the group. By placing one's vote in the ballot box, one acquires a portion of power and hence, to some extent, a satisfied conscience: one feels one has done one's duty as a citizen and that as a result one is being governed in the way one desires. There is then no further need to influence community life by taking further action. The voter can relax. Indeed, in many cases

voters want to be governed rather than govern themselves. Education for democracy also involves an understanding of this basic subtlety.

The vote, universal suffrage and the participation of all in the life of the city are important victories for the democratic idea. However they are liable to being led astray. This point must be stressed, because it is not enough for authority to be chosen by the group: it is equally important for everybody to be able to control their own destiny. No democratic regime should be content with implementing the wishes of the majority. It should also further the development of minorities and individual opinions.

We should pay very careful attention to the role of the elected representative whom people put their trust in: he or she may be the interpreter of the collective will but is not that of individual desires. Since there cannot be as many representatives as there are citizens, democracy is imperfect at best. Even in the Netherlands, the cradle of free thinking, whose people are particularly supportive of human rights and tolerance: it is said that when three Dutch people get together they represent three political parties and three religious sects. The elected representatives may well adopt measures in the general interest which, to some people, appear coercive.

The essential point is that society, however imperfectly organized, fickle and approximate, should not devalue us as human beings, snuff out our private conscience, or shatter our dignity as independent, self-determining and social creatures. For when society abases, humiliates or constrains the individual, it forces him or her into rebellion. From then on, right in the democratic sense is no longer on the side of those who

are in charge of the state or community, but of those who resist.

“Human nature in itself is neither good nor bad: it is made good or bad by education. Education reaches beyond the being to target the “ought-to-be”, assuming that humanity is perfectible”.⁵ The higher the individual rises in society, the more responsibility he or she assumes and the greater the importance of this “ought-to-be”. A head of state or government, a member of parliament, a trades union official or a religious dignitary is expected to show complete moral probity over and above other attributes. The more one is educated, the higher one rises, in the moral as well as in the social sense. It is important therefore to keep faith in the human capacity to excel oneself and in that of education to help us to do so.

This concept of perfectibility is an essential one. Like Montesquieu, we shall talk of the “teleological function of education, a process wherein the human being is both subject and object and wherein it is appropriate to form the person before fashioning the citizen. Education depends upon the ends that people and society assign one another. It is beholden to society’s schemes”. There is no doubt that one of the roads to salvation for the developing societies is to change society by legitimate means, as it was for the revolutionaries of 1789. Indeed is there an alternative when the social body is incapable of generating a normative system that guarantees the fundamental freedoms? Or when the essence of these freedoms is lacking in one’s own traditions and history? The state is then the guardian of the law, and the master, as for Aristotle, is none other than the legislator. Many believe that equality – that state so inconceivable in nature, in religions or in political life – must be legal in essence. “There can be

no education for democracy without first challenging the sociological world-view, which subordinates the will to facts, which legitimises what exists and mistrusts what ought to be. The democratic choice has no meaning without universal suffrage and triumph of the will and reason over nature. Education for democracy is nothing but education for modernity".⁶

This view of modernity is probably an idealised, generous and optimistic one: even highly optimistic having regard to the fact that no society has yet managed entirely to replace force by law, to eradicate natural human impulses and replace them by cultural attitudes, or even to cut human beings off from their religious traditions. In any event, one creed may well conceal another: did people at one time not speak about the "cult of reason"? After all, the events that accompanied its introduction and the behaviour of its instigators were not always noticeable for their humanitarianism. To do away with a degenerate monarchy, it is not enough to behead the king. Countries which have kept their kings, removing some or all of their power and handing it over to democratically elected authorities, have perhaps had more success than those in the past who thought they could make a fresh start.

We shall see later that the compulsory secularisation of education – like certain other measures, imported from countries regarded as models and applied by force – by overturning cultures and traditions sometimes thousands of years old, has had almost the opposite effect to that desired: the outburst of integrationism, accompanied by its train of violence and moral and physical excess.

Transitions take place gradually or not at all. In some cases, far from advancing a nation on the way to democracy and respect for human rights, they take it back into

the past to levels of barbarism thought to have finally passed away. The progress of history is like a pendulum. If it is pushed too violently in one direction, it will swing violently in the other; it will take a considerable time for it to resume its normal behaviour of a reasonable swing to either side of the centre.

Teaching the basic facts: developing the critical faculty

An entirely different approach to education for democracy is that of learning to live in society by questioning and examining basic facts. "Although the aims of this education are, naturally, self-development and technical and economic progress, they should also encompass the development of a critical faculty".⁷ For example every citizen should learn to question the most widespread ideas: for example, are we absolutely certain that liberty is the fruit of political discussion? Should every individual be a legislator? Should the state take the place of local authorities? Within what limits can a government, even when democratically elected, aspire to exercise power?

It is true that education for democracy should enable every citizen to resist tyranny; however the wishes of the majority can become tyrannical, and this may pass unperceived. It is essential therefore continuously to question the functioning of the institutions – the extent to which they are legitimate and representative.

We know that every utopian radical, from Plato on, has dreamed of transforming society through education, but none of them looked for democratic education. Democratic education is not only the cause of democracy,

it is also one of its consequences. How can democracy be taught if it does not already exist? And if it already exists, why make it the subject of a specific course of education, since it stands to reason? Moving beyond this unredeemed chicken-egg argument, it is essential to adopt a single requirement, no doubt minimalist but nonetheless fundamental: education's role should primarily be the basic transmission of knowledge, but also the training of the mind (i.e., the critical faculty) in order that this knowledge may be evaluated freely and individually. Pupils and students must be taught essentially to distinguish between historical facts – modern theories of which have shown how tyrants or oppressive, dogma-ridden societies were able to twist and corrupt them – and real facts, the historical truths upon which everybody agrees. Individuals must be taught to judge for themselves and then in turn to pass on the truth, nothing but the truth and as much of the truth as possible. This raises a basic question, which some may regard as iconoclastic: "To what extent does learning democracy help us to tell the truth?"

Individual freedom and social order

At this stage of the process, two of the main topics for consideration now emerge:

1. How is education able to reconcile the development of individual independence or free will with that of community solidarity ... the law-abiding state?

In the modern world it is probably necessary to draw a distinction between two types of society: first those which are increasingly diversifying and which are having

to resolve – and have sometimes had to resolve for a very long time – problems of mixed races and cultures, and to manage migratory flows; secondly, those which have remained apart from these flows, either for reasons of geographical isolation or because they have quite deliberately protected their homogeneity and particular characteristics. London is not Rangoon, Toronto is not Tokyo and Amsterdam is not Salt Lake City. In the former type of society, the questions raised by the harmonisation of individual liberty with belonging to a community are not posed in the same terms as in the latter, and are not dealt with in the same way. It seems reasonable to believe that a young Icelander sees the reconciliation of independence and a citizenship quite differently from a young person from Mali who has just entered a classroom in the Paris suburbs together with children from twenty different nationalities.

How can the recognition of universal values be combined with the expression and defence of cultural specificities? How can these two requirements be dealt with in complementary terms and not as opposites?

Certainly no panacea exists. Democracy is not a “ready-to-use” system, capable of being imported and established in any kind of context. It is that “state of mind” that Thomas Masaryk referred to, the system of values that every country can appropriate, adapt and transform, enriching it with its own standards and traditions. The moral values that underlie democracy exist quite naturally to some degree in every culture, precisely because of the universality of the structures of the human mind. But to deduce that there is an absolute model, applicable *urbi et orbi*, would be tantamount to negating its very essence, in other words the respect for differences.

2. These considerations naturally lead on to a second set of questions, the logical sequel to the examination of the objectives of education for democracy: what is, or could be, its content. If it is wished that the expression of the universal should descend to the particular, it is important not to accept everything in bulk, support everything on the pretext of tolerance and guaranteed freedoms, blanking out the fact that certain particularities are unsuitable for our time.

After setting out the general principles, it is a matter of tackling concrete, specific and often delicate questions such as sexual equality, the secularisation of education, family customs, food taboos and even those related to clothing. Certain age-old customs that still obtain here and there – mutilation, stonings and other insults to the physical integrity of persons, for example – cannot be incorporated in the curriculum of education for democracy in the name of respecting differences. No more than can arbitrary imprisonment, the deportation of entire populations, the exploitation of child labour, and so on. In the spirit of tolerance, some things are tolerable, others intolerable. Marking out the boundaries is one of the tasks of education for democracy.

Freedom is an indispensable element of democracy, and consists, in the words of Article IV of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, in “being able to do anything that does not harm others”. This principle will consequently be highlighted in any programme of education, as a prerequisite to any passing on of knowledge, as its very condition. It should be possible to reach universal agreement on this minimum principle and ensure that it is respected. Believing or not believing in God, or believing in a God other than that of one’s neighbour, harms nobody.

However imposing one's own beliefs on one's neighbour is harmful, whatever the means employed.

- Any form of discrimination is harmful.
- Any form of physical, psychological or social violence is anti-democratic.
- Any form of economic or political coercion that leads individuals to enslave themselves is contrary to human rights.
- Any attempt to appropriate power by non-democratic means is an attack on collective and individual freedoms.

These are some of the elements in the curriculum of education for democracy, which one day should become self-evident for all. However, before embarking on these problems, it is important to remind ourselves once again that the objective governing the teaching of democratic behaviour should never be that of forming little democrats in the same way as one trains clever monkeys. It is to train men and women.

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II

THE CONTENT

A country's schools are its future in miniature

Tehyi Hsieh

From the moment when, as a new-born child opening its eyes and distinguishing with difficulty the faces of its parents leaning over it, until the moment when, as an old person, we slowly expire as our children's faces leaning towards us fade away, we human beings pass through a large number of stages during which we learn about humankind, society and the world. This learning process, these many steps along the way of discovering humanity, can schematically be subdivided as follows:

- **The family:** initially limited – father and mother – then widened to brothers and sisters, then widened further to embrace cousins, friends and neighbours. This is the age at which the child discovers people in very small numbers, all fairly similar, in a homogeneous environment and in a usually harmonious atmosphere. The child, surrounded by love, cradled, persuaded and coddled, experiences those special years in which it has no awareness of conflict, inequalities and injustice. It is the centre of the universe.

- **At school:** for the first time we leave this limited environment, this golden age, and find ourselves suddenly immersed in a heterogeneous community in which we are confronted by a whole series of differences. Some of our friends are bigger, less well dressed, have darker skins, run faster, have loud voices or don't know how to play ball. The girls have less pretty hair, are more resourceful or are unable to answer the teacher's questions. This is the age at which the child discovers people in small numbers. In the micro-society of the classroom, we have to come to terms with our fellows, sometimes so unlike ourselves, and accept and tolerate them. We like some more than others. At the same time as we develop a real spirit of camaraderie, our ego hardens. We are no longer the centre of the universe.

- **In high school (and then perhaps at university):** now that we are "battle hardened" on the field of physical, psychological and social inequalities, we have to face intellectual inequalities, rivalries and competition. But we are also initiated into how institutions operate, we learn the history of peoples, their differences, their wars and their mixtures. As our knowledge widens, we discover people in large numbers. Our world is no longer the microcosm of the family or school, but the macrocosm where, amongst billions of individuals, we are no more than an infinitesimally small cog. We are now on the very edge of the universe. During this period, probably the most difficult – it brings the disturbances of adolescence, where the individual changes from being the object of every attention to that of a subject now having to play its own role, individually

and voluntarily – one learns – or does not learn – about democratic behaviour. Or, to put it another way: either one blossoms, convinced that through one's own development one will be able to contribute to improving society, or one turns in upon oneself, prey to the sentiment that in an ugly world beyond hope of perfection, only one's own survival is worth interest and effort. It is education, and only education, which will prompt us to take one of these avenues.

- **Social and professional life:** civil servant or labourer, journalist or technician, politician or craftworker, shop-keeper or teacher, our subject must now actively integrate into society. He or she discovers people in very large numbers, with all their qualities and faults, and can identify with them in their situation. No longer are we content to observe, study and learn. It is no longer the time for catechisms, civics, the principles of liberty and equality, and respect for human rights all dispensed by a teacher from a dais.

It is now time for action, in a world where people, although equal under the law, are unequal in fact; where there is often no salvation outside one's own community; where competition wins the day over fraternity; where it is rare to see democratic ideals being applied. How can anyone, in this substantially hostile environment, behave as a true democrat?

Of course the typical "progress" from childhood to adult life we have just described is fairly simplistic, having regard to the limited scope of this booklet, but it would be useful to consult the works of Piaget¹ and Wallon.²

Knowledge, values and skills

Learning democratic behaviour involves acquiring knowledge, adopting values and mastering certain skills. We shall adopt these three postulates. However, as a kind of preamble, let us quote some of the warnings developed by Catherine Kintzler: "No science, knowledge or technique is immediately available as an entity ... Learning involves a process that regresses from the advanced to the elementary, which reduces knowledge to its essentials so that it may be understood, mastered and used ... The very principle of the school involves setting aside those pedagogical methods that give priority to practice (social, cultural and technical) or to theory ... replacing them by an explicit teaching method based upon a rational breakdown of knowledge and techniques".³ It will always be important to consider carefully the content of whatever one is teaching, while attempting to relate the particular to the general, otherwise the "taught democracy" would be merely another way of adding to a curriculum, when in fact it should be a veritable initiation to life in society.

1. Knowledge

As far as knowledge is concerned, it is obvious that the teaching of human rights is the basis of any education for democracy. It is appropriate to teach not only the basic principles of human rights but also the guarantees and responsibilities that go with them. UNESCO has done a considerable amount of work in this area, resulting in various publications, essential material that deserves wide

reference. To avoid duplication we shall not go into these UNESCO publications in detail here, but will refer to those in which the question of human rights has been dealt with at length for some years.

However, the democratic outlook cannot be conveyed only by this form of teaching, if the process is not to be purely didactic and devoid of interest. It should be possible for the notion of "human rights" to be passed on not as a concept or abstract idea but as a practice involving the acquisition of other knowledge: an introduction to political, economic and social life, to the operation of institutions, to taxation and to rights to health and education. It is certainly as important to know how one's district or county functions as to learn by heart the international laws that codify human dignity and the fundamental freedoms. Human rights only exist if they are applied.

Thus the entire problem is how to dispense education for democracy in a manner that combines the concrete and the abstract, succeeds in demonstrating the general law by particular examples, in getting students to understand how significance and meaning coincide and how they are inseparable.

Secondly, the process of learning to decipher society, indeed the whole world in which we live, means becoming familiar with its history: not only the history of local heroes, regional sagas and the salient facts of famous ancestors who defended the country or who drew up the constitution, but also that of other peoples, even the most remote. There is no doubt that developing curiosity, an omnidirectional global interest in the history of humankind, is one of the keys to education for democracy. It will certainly avoid plenty of misunderstandings,

incomprehension and intolerance. It will open the way to dialogue. But we shall see that this involves a real teaching problem, because particular moments in history are perceived differently when they are taught at one side of river, mountain or sea, or the other. History weighs heavily in the collective unconscious; it can be wielded as a powerful instrument, with formidable effects, which has been the subject of temptation more than once. So the question arises as to which history should be taught, in order to reconcile the value placed on particular identities, the preservation of national identities and the construction of a universal consciousness. A great deal remains to be done before it will be possible to formulate a "universal history" that is truly universal, that reconciles the viewpoints of old enemies, restores equilibrium to roles and responsibilities, and gives equivalent treatment to all cultures – those which once were dominant but are now marginalised or exhausted, and those whose recent emergence may take on the outer garments of messianic enthusiasm and radicalism suitable to young parties and young nations.

Thirdly, we shall consider the suitability of teaching religious subjects. Without going into the dispute between religious and lay education, it must be borne in mind that in the process of intercultural literacy, to which all societies inevitably tend, a knowledge of faiths, dogmas, beliefs and philosophical systems is a fundamental and indispensable tool. Here it is no longer a matter only of tolerating but of understanding.

When the customs, way of living and speech of a Moslem, Christian, Israeli, Buddhist, Hindu or atheist neighbour differ from ours, we must acquire conceptual tools in order to be able to "decode" his practices.

2. Values

Teaching a commonality of values to everyone is not easy. No doubt the codes which govern every society contain a certain number of taboos. But here again it will be important to take care to adapt education to regional, national or cultural sensibilities.

Take adultery for example, something virtually unknown in some countries but punished extremely cruelly in others. It will not be a simple matter to preach a middle way between ultra-permissiveness – which can result in the dissolution of morals and the breakdown of the family – and maintaining the customs of the Middle Ages – notorious examples of the violation of human rights which in no case can be justified by law, be it holy scripture or not.

Another example: there are Third World communities, new to the practice of universal suffrage, where everybody finds it quite normal for the chief to vote for the whole village and on its behalf (to those who take offence at this, it might be pointed out that this practice strongly resembles the “presidential elector” system, still used in some of the most advanced countries). But the question is how to get the same notion of individuality – free will – understood and accepted in places where for a long time it has been the basis of the broadest social fabric, when elsewhere it has never had the slightest meaning apart from that of belonging to a homogeneous community. To take two examples:

- (a) I, as an individual, am entirely sovereign and independent. However, as I enjoy my liberty, I am sometimes found to be desperately isolated, lost in the mass,

transplanted, anonymous, in a huge city or hostile environment in which I find it impossible to be assimilated. I am free under the law, but solitary;

- (b) I, as an individual, see my identity only as a member of the tribe, family or community. I form part of a whole. I am well-rooted. I am perhaps not free in fact, but I am united with others.

Hence the ideal would be to reconcile the two forms of liberty, by harmonizing rights and duties, individuality and the community.

Although it appears relatively easy to reach a consensus on a limited set of common values, the situation is different when these abstract values are to be applied to the social standards of behaviour: should authority win the day over the critical faculty (solidarity over individuality)?

It is clear that we are experiencing today a conflict of generations, between traditional values and those of modernity and even post-modernity. Who can resolve it? To young people, the inheritance they are offered is a world threatened by the depletion of its resources and overpopulation, polluted, unravelling, prey to inequality, violence and injustice. The adults, for their part, impotently watch the erosion and collapse of the value systems on which they had built their hopes.

On the one hand, people still await the affluent society of abundance that is supposed to emerge from free trade and the market economy, allowing the poorest to improve themselves. On the other hand, the great revolutionary movements are sharing disenchantment with the traditions and religions that they thought they could replace. Those who want to restore the ancient

beliefs are called fanatics, revisionists living in the past; those who want to accelerate the march of time by employing the tools of science are regarded as witch doctors.

For half a century now, or perhaps longer, morality has allowed itself to be outstripped by know-how in the sense of acquiring technical skills – and the cult of profit. A country that yesterday was known for its brilliant achievements in humanitarian aid today rejoices in bringing off a large weapons contract. In these circumstances, how can cynicism and *realpolitik* be avoided? At the same time, how is it possible to explain to young people that all wars are immoral but that 500,000 jobs are threatened if we stop making guns?

If we accept Locke's proposition that the child has essentially the same characteristics as the adult (as regards desires, passions and reason),⁴ how can we offer that child simultaneously an ethical structure – built from great, fine and generous principles of equality and fraternity – and an arsenal of weapons designed for defence and attack in a pitiless society? How can the child make sense of it?

In the great farrago that exists between the need to survive, the race to development and the preservation of roots and identities, what remains that can be taught equally in Valparaiso or Stockholm, Jakarta or Dallas, Melbourne or Cairo?

What remains? All that remains are the few values that all of us can rally to: those of democracy. Pluralism, solidarity and tolerance (ethnic, racial, cultural and religious) will be the inevitable products of human mixing, of the multiplication of intercultural exchanges, of language learning, of the study of attachments, and their approaches to geography and history.

The whole issue of education for democracy is complex, but does hold out hope. As Federico Mayor pointed out at the closure of the Prague Forum: "The time has passed when reason was the rallying cry of some, and identity that of others".⁵ The elements of democratic education can be found in both; setting the one against the other would merely feed an outdated and sterile quarrel. It is in their complementary aspects that the solution can be found.

3. Skills

Finally, as regards the nature and exercise of skills, it will be interesting to examine the qualities required by those who aspire – or are qualified, or express the most profound interest, the most profound desire – to teach democracy. Probably everyone will agree that teachers of democracy cannot exist *per se*. Nobody wants more priests in addition to those who already exist.

As we have said, democracy is not an exact science, indeed not a science at all, and cannot be passed on in a didactic manner. The exercise of choices and responsibilities inherent in the teaching of democracy presupposes a mastery of skills such as a critical faculty, independence of mind, initiative, abilities in negotiation and the peaceful settlement of conflicts, the delegation of authority and a respect for disparities. No teacher of philosophy, priest, imam, rabbi or bonze will possess all these qualities, nor can they be relegated to a course on morals or civics. It is well known that it can be harmful to separate the teaching of values from that of science and technology, and it is clear that the virtues needed for teaching democracy will be widely spread throughout the teaching profession,

whatever their disciplines or the subjects being taught. Why should the teacher of philosophy be more of a democrat than the teacher of chemistry or music?

However, outside the circles of school and university, the values of democracy should also underpin the thoughts and actions of those who, although not strictly teachers, act as such – often without being fully aware of it – and play a substantial role in education: parents, older siblings, local and national politicians, journalists, decision-makers, opinion formers, trades unionists, and so on. A sports club coach has as much influence on the formation of a young mind through personal conduct and example, or through the attitude of healthy emulation and joint effort he or she generates, as a “professional” teacher, or a moralist whose vocation is to inculcate *ex nihilo* the concepts of State, Equality or Human Rights to those who as yet hardly know their fellows.

Before reviewing some of the topics which may help the teaching of democracy, it is probably worth mentioning once again Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. ... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship amongst all social or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. Parents shall have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children”

Thus the family is the basic cell, the moral authority *par excellence*, which has the power both to prolong its own traditions and to provide children with the means of discovering others – i.e., giving them access to elements of comparison and hence forming their critical judgement and opening them up to the world.

However, the obstacles are many: the family, being introverted, may pass on obsolete value systems, clinging firmly to the past so as to hold on at all costs to that from which it developed and constitutes its reason for being. Or indeed the disjoint and broken family may neglect its children, perhaps simply because the parents, both forced to work, to meet increasingly heavy economic pressures, have had to reduce the amount of time they spend on the upbringing, protection and harmonious development of their offspring.

Secular and religious teaching, family ties, appreciating the world by learning its history, developing the faculty of judging for oneself, passing on knowledge intended not only to train specialists but also humanists ... these are some of the imperatives for education for democracy.

Religious anthropology

To examine more closely how democratic values, humanism and religious beliefs can co-exist, we shall now take a particular example, particularly appropriate since in the present decade it is the focus of news and discussion: the existence of a purely Islamic model of democracy, which can be compared with that exported by the West. For this purpose we shall follow the analysis of Mohammed Arkoun⁶ which invites us to reflect, first in the universal

perspective – the creative freedom of the human being as citizen and individual, critical understanding, harmonisation of the state and civil society, a constitution freely accepted and scrupulously respected – and, secondly, in that of the particular, while considering the local constraints of all societies for which the democratic issue came from outside. In other words, a large number of Arab Muslim countries.

“Thinking about education for democracy means – beyond all the social forms of violence which impose solutions – giving priority and primacy to discussion between free spirits, concerned only for the emancipation of people, of all men, women and children in society”. The “discussion” here is understood in the Latin sense of the medieval *disputatio*, practised in the Arab world since the ninth and tenth centuries under the name of *munazara*.

In classical Islamic thought, the *munazara* excludes any violent confrontation and represents the face-to-face contact of intelligences seeking to communicate. Easily predating literacy, it is the most democratic mode of exchange and therefore of education: from the free confrontation of ideas comes the light.

“Speaking of education”, continues Arkoun, “means first identifying, organizing and agreeing upon the single authority empowered to utter, transmit and protect the values upon which the ethical, legal and political order of society is based. Hence it is essential to return to the sources from which this order stems”. Thus, according to Islamic thought, divine law is separate from human power. A difference is drawn between the authority which formulates, sets out and discusses the sense, and that which ensures that the orders are applied, often by force. While understanding the historical need for the identity claims

of the traditional religious communities, it is a matter of urgency to provide substantial space in the curriculum of education for democracy for what Arkoun calls "the anthropology of modernity". To clarify his proposition, he suggests that education should be steered to the following objectives:

1. Freeing the teaching of history from its subservience to the interests of the nation state. This applies to the European countries with ancient democratic traditions, such as France and the United Kingdom, as well as to the countries recently freed from colonial domination.

For the former, Arkoun gives the example of the French Republic, centralising and secular in character, where "the campaign for the referendum of Maastricht clearly revealed the mental blocks due to the educational practices of the nation state".

For the others, like those of North Africa, he points out that their experience of the imported model of nation state has been further complicated by the imposition of religious teaching which has "diverted both spirituality and theological thought", and he deplores that the teaching of history as a scientific discipline is experiencing "painful delays" in these countries.

2. Considering how popular sovereignty has replaced the theological-political complex formerly controlled by the doctrinal masters as the source of legitimacy for the nation state. It is only today, now that the Marxist model is no longer playing the role of ideological and apologetic foil to the liberal model, that the Western countries are beginning to develop a critical view on the true meaning and potential of the sudden separation of the two systems –

a separation without equivalent anywhere else in the world.

In fact what did take place? How was Europe able, after pointing to the excesses of the spiritual and religious dogmas, to extricate itself and produce the secular and even more radical dogma, from which today it is suffering? According to Arkoun, we must re-read history. The entire history of the French Revolution, from the emergence of the Civil Code between 1800 and 1804, the thinking of the nineteenth century, the "period of enlightenment, euphoric, confident in the power of its exploration and judgement, was a kind of perpetual celebration".

The result has been a "laicised" teaching of history, in other words one cut off from the comparative history of cultures. Arkoun goes on to state what he means by "lay": "Lay teaching of the history of religions should not be concerned only with avoiding the re-introduction of catechism in schools. The new requirement in teaching religious anthropology is to restore to the religions the truth of their aims, their historic functions, cultural contributions, and their place, not yet fully occupied by any form of modern humanism".

3. Incorporating in the teaching of history the three dimensions of knowledge: myth, critical history and philosophy.

Although Claude Lévi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu and others have rehabilitated the knowledge of myth by opening up reason to all internal logics, cultural systems and levels of meaning, anthropology is still largely held captive by the conceptual apparatus of the last century: there is still a dichotomy between mythology and history, between symbolic knowledge and scientific knowledge, and between:

- (a) the “serious” world (today the Group of Seven, which sets itself up as the guardian of universal thought on the basis of its industrial, military and technological supremacy);
- (b) that which “has not been, but might become so” – Central Europe, the Second World;
- (c) that which “has never been so”: the Third World.

Mohammed Arkoun considers the aims of the operation of myth in the major founding religious scriptures and the secondary texts or stories, those which “transfigure the history of a group into seminal values, models of thought and action, enshrined thereafter as the inaugural moment of a collective destiny”. For Moses, this was the Exodus, for Christ the Passion, the Hegira with Mohammed and even the French Revolution. Thus the passing on of myth, the teaching of scripture, all the elements making one’s own roots intelligible – no doubt as much symbolic and historic as ethnic – are fundamental vehicles in the process of forming behaviour. They cannot be wiped out, or replaced by any “Cult of Reason” whose principles, often abstractions grafted on reality, are paradoxically liable to cause a citizen, *a priori* in natural harmony with his or her society and group, to assume attitudes of revolt against the community from which he or she has emerged, rather than trying to improve or move it forward towards greater equity and adapt it to the new constraints of modernity.

Indeed every attempt to wipe out the founding myths has resulted in failure: Conquistadors and priests were unable to overcome the “plumed serpent” in Central America, like Lenin and the “Holy Russia” of the Czars.

Neither Atatürk, nor Reza Shah Pahlavi could drive out Mohammed, and it is a good bet that Confucius will survive Mao Tse-tung.

The Iranian sociologist and historian Ehsan Naraghi, founder of the Institute for Social Research in Tehran and adviser to UNESCO, describes how the secular and public schools in his country were the symbol and crucible of democratic ideas before the 1906 revolution. However, during the time of Mohammad Reza Shah, "... the school's main aim was to provide young students with diplomas; there was no attempt to turn them into citizens. The more important this school became, the more it offered a chasm between society and culture. Economic development, which was the Shah's watchword, took no account of cultural values or social relationships". The result was the secular school, which had no fewer than 8 million pupils on the eve of the 1979 Islamic revolution, and was unable to counter the growing influence of the religious outlook. The Shah's regime had been built upon economic and social achievements which kept the clerics and the "bazaris" (the traditional shopkeepers) at arm's length. The former were then able to rely on the monopolistic development of power to obtain the support of the latter, who did not fit well into the new form of private industrialisation favoured by the protectionist State. "The bazaris gave financial support to the charitable works of the mullahs (guardians of the Koranic law) who in return gave them social recognition and moral support".

In the absence of any trades union, community life or political pluralism, religion provided the only community arena tolerated by the authorities. While the Shah, unaware of this situation, spoke of the "great civilisation" he proposed to construct along western lines, the uprooted

peasant population flooded to the cities, incapable of identifying with modernity based upon foreign symbols they did not understand. The Islamic militants capitalised on the cultural anguish generated by an imported way of life: "religion became the main link to the preservation of culture and to the defence of the Iranian community, and thus enhanced its role of collective identification". The outcome is well known.

The lesson that Naraghi draws from this secular-religious drama, this brutal confrontation between modernity and tradition, is clear: "When the instruments of emancipation become mindless and dogmatic, they also become instruments of oppression". By refusing to separate politics and religion, or the clergy from the State, by inseparably binding spirituality and community, Islam, like other religions, presents itself as a way of combating the dissolution of the social fabric.

However when secularity generates a spiritual backlash, or when spirituality does not permit the real exercise of democracy – refusing exclusion, reducing privilege and injustice, respecting freedom of thought – chaos and intolerance take over. The Shah, whose ambition was to resolve all problems by "modernisation", led his people into complete disarray by trying to pull up its roots. The Islamic religion, which has now taken over, is likely to shut out these very same people from the modern world and its new economic, scientific, educational and cultural gifts.

"The secular and Shiite worlds should, according to their own principles, be fighting the same battle: that of understanding, which can tolerate no exclusion. The revolutionary fervour now appears exhausted, both in fact and in people's minds. Tradition and revolution are not reason", continues Naraghi. "Perhaps future generations, educated

in these schools of history, will take other, alternative routes able to bring a new spirituality, as well as a better organized society”.

The propositions of Mohammed Arkoun, like those of Ehsan Naraghi, demonstrate the importance of reconciling the old and the new, of bringing about a progressive evolution in outlook through education, without attempting suddenly to wipe out centuries of philosophical and religious education during which cultures have slowly been formulated. The exponential acceleration of history, the forward rush of humanity and the new necessity for it to take up new challenges, to find, as quickly as possible, new ways of managing a co-existence that has become a world-wide problem – the equitable sharing of the world’s physical resources and improved circulation of scientific knowledge – cannot obscure the process of maturing and evolution in which it has been involved for millennia. In this process, religions have played, and are still playing, the subliminal role that is specific to the human mind. They have enabled us to give meaning to life. The role of spirituality, even when relative and limited, sometimes resulting in ostracism, exclusion or intolerance, is still essential for anyone wanting to decipher their own history.

Which history to teach?

As has been made clear by the historian Marc Ferro, co-director of “Annales” and chairman of the Research Association of the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales de Paris, “... a number of phenomena have blanked out the sense of history and the collective destiny of societies”. Of course this primarily concerns the collapse

of the great ideologies: Marxism and liberalism. In Moscow, just as in Paris or Cairo, in Hanoi just as in Caracas, the leaders are no longer able to shore up their actions using the classical models of "left" and "right" that have prevailed for half a century. But in parallel with these failures, the reappearance of religious practices that had been thought obsolete once again complicates the intelligence of the contemporary world. They had probably been buried too soon.

And then, continues Marc Ferro, "many are the homes where historic speeches are now made": the media in particular are breaking down the traditional structure of knowledge. Anything can be said, a good thing in itself; but everything can be said, on any subject, by anyone, which can have unfortunate consequences. Films, documentaries, articles ... many types of knowledge are intermixed and interfere with one another, with no possibility for the public to refer to criteria of truth, or scientific models. A young journalist straight out of school is able to explain, on the basis of a press agency bulletin, the deepest motivations of the head of a State he or she has never visited, whose language he or she does not speak and whose history he or she does not even know – but since the journalist has access to the written word, the journalist is the authority.

Pictures themselves can no longer be trusted. It has long been possible to remove a now troublesome apparatus from an official photograph; today a report or documentary can be based upon completely artificial pictures produced on a computer. History can daily be modified and doctored. Timisoara or the Gulf War are recent examples. The serious side of this is that it can be done by ignorance or with malign intent. We have moved from

inherited history to "trompe-l'œil history" and it is now impossible to tell whether one is watching pictures from the archives or a sequence filmed in the studio. No doubt the adults who lived through the events being reported or doctored can make their own corrections. But what about the children and adolescents who lack any means of comparison and are so bound to take what they read, see and hear as the real thing? And what of all those who did not themselves live through the great moments of the past? And what of the millions of men and women who, made docile by television, are fascinated by the words and pictures from the small cathode ray tube, as people were once by their preachers? The spoken word and the pictorial allegory have in no way lost their strength. They have simply changed hands and techniques.

"In this state of disorder," says Ferro, "even the need to understand history has been questioned, in the name of the desire to build the future, the wish to forget the injuries of the past". There are many grey areas, and subjective attitudes prevail. Clearly the history of the colonial era is written differently in London or Delhi, Paris or Algiers, the Hague or Jakarta. Napoleon is a hero or a butcher, depending on the nationality of the speaker. What is much more important than understanding history is to understand its gaps and continuities, because it takes many forms. "It is extremely important that each community and each country should also be able not only to understand their own history, but also that of the others, otherwise they would no longer understand the world". Knowledge of the history of one's country, with its myths and legends, is the primary requirement in grasping one's past and trying to determine one's place in the world. To reject it on the pretext that it harbours

untruths or departures from fact, would be a mistake, because it is rooted in the collective memory and reappears in times of crisis. Parricide cannot go unpunished. And, at the same time, studying the history of one's neighbour – of all one's neighbours – is some slight counter to the emotional burden that weighs down one's own history.

All writing of history is subjective. All history books, whether they emanate from the State, the Church, the Party or any dominant institution, are formulated to serve a cause. This includes the countries regarded as the most democratic. It is useful to consider history told from the opposite point of view: how the Indians or the Blacks see the history of the United States, the Berbers that of North Africa, the Tibetans that of China, the Tartars that of Russia, and so on. These "other histories" are not necessarily more reliable than the official "histories" but they do have the merit of constituting parallel existences, of creating a counterpart to dogma, of rebalancing the relationships of the weak to the strong. The thousand-year history of the South African Zulus is now concomitant with the secular history of the Boers. It will always be so. Both have no choice but to co-exist, and the mere statement of this fact brings hope: the spiritual strength of democratic values will, sooner or later, overcome the rivalries and relationships of "dominator-dominated" that have brought so much evil around the world.

It is important to understand history as others see it. "Every memory must be invoked", continues Marc Ferro. These are often illusory, but their representation is a living thing and, without them, it is impossible to pacify minds, and get people to hear and understand one another.

From the Tower of Babel to international English

“People have long wondered whether there was a natural language common to all people” said Jean-Jacques Rousseau. “No doubt there is one; that which children speak before they know how to talk”.⁷ The idealistic nature of this remark cannot obscure the fact that in today’s world approximately three thousand separate languages are spoken, not counting dialects. By the year 2000, several dozen of these languages will have disappeared for ever. And perhaps in a century only the main languages will be used – i.e., those spoken by more than one hundred million people: Chinese, Hindi, Russian, Arabic, Spanish, Indonesian, Portuguese, Bengali, French, Japanese and German. It is probable that English will have imposed itself around the world as the only common language and, if it has not done so already, fulfil the role which should have been that of Esperanto: a universal means of communication. English – not “the Queen’s English” or British English, the usage of which is also declining – but international English which, since the colonial expansion and independence of the United States, has spread over the five continents and has never stopped moving towards extreme simplification to allow people to understand one another quickly, whatever their maternal language, their own culture and their degree of education.

English has official status in more than forty countries; 70% of scientific publications are in English; bankers, industrialists, traders, computer specialists, researchers, travel agents and so forth use it virtually exclusively; in international discussions, even in the world of diplomacy, which traditionally used French, English is now indispensable.

This linguistic tidal wave, this sudden hegemony of one language over the others calls for three remarks:

- (a) in historical terms the growth of this language is relatively recent: two centuries at the most. Nobody can predict its future, but it is developing at a time when international communications have become basic and where education is general enough for English to become profoundly fixed in national usage, more at least than was Latin in the Roman Empire. One might therefore say that it has become an indispensable language and that its teaching should be generalised;
- (b) the English language originally dominated for political and economic reasons, being that of the richest and most powerful countries. But it no longer belongs to the Anglo-Saxon world. It has escaped. It has become a sort of *lingua franca* used around the world and modified thereby, adapted to people's needs. Today it constitutes the best means of meeting the new requirements of the international community, based upon criteria of speed, simplicity and precision. English meets these criteria better than any other language, being easily accessible, concrete, and able to form compound words based upon an image or an association of ideas;
- (c) in certain countries, and in certain social classes, English is likely completely to replace the mother tongue of the non-English speakers, causing them to forget it. This represents a major risk of cultural and intellectual impoverishment. Spaniards who speak to their Italian neighbours in English have a problem of identity. We see Dutch promoters doing business in

English with Germans. Conversely however, India's unity was achieved largely through the English language.

Multilingualism is an instrument of openness. Even if it is important for everybody to speak English for reasons of convenience, everybody should on the other hand maintain, develop, and keep alive their mother tongue, if only to maintain their identity. And they should, if they can, acquire a third, fourth or as many languages as possible. Whatever La Bruyère says ("One can hardly burden childhood with the learning of too many languages"),⁸ getting children accustomed at a very early age to using several languages is to open them up to the complexity of different cultures, beliefs and methods of thought and hence to achieve relativity. In other words, they are provided with the elements of comparison which will assist them to forge an attitude of tolerance. It has been observed that any decline in the teaching of foreign languages always corresponds to a decline in culture and a rise of intolerance.

Over the centuries the development of thought has taken on a great variety of forms, and languages are the best illustration of this richness and variety.

Theoretically, the human brain can adapt to many languages. Children aged ten or twelve nearly always possess a prodigious capacity for assimilating sounds, and memorising grammatical structures and the meaning of symbols. Let us turn this to account. Let us teach them a large number of languages as soon as possible. Let us show them the world's diversity and multiplicity, the range of vocabularies, so revealing of attitudes.

According to Michel Malherbe, writer, globetrotter and linguist: "The tower of Babylon, known as the tower

of Babel to add further to the confusion of languages, is the symbol of the inability to unify humankind. Its construction called for many workers who had to be brought from great distances. Every tribe had its own language, as its technical speciality. Work was abandoned, the people did not mix, there was no time for any common language to emerge, and everyone returned home with that feeling of impotence which history has handed down to us".

Let us hope that things are different today; that races who inevitably have to work and live together can find a common *lingua franca* while retaining their own means of intelligibility.

The languages of many countries of Africa and Asia have no written form. It is found that villagers on the boundaries of different linguistic groups speak mixed languages that stem from migrations and mixing. In the most industrialised countries, the same phenomena can be observed: languages interpenetrate, cultures enrich one another through the use of words, and the old temptations to reject the neighbour and become ethnocentric are losing their force.

Multilingualism can keep us from racism

There is no doubt that travelling the world calls for a degree of flexibility and an undeniable faculty for adaptation. These qualities begin through the learning of languages, even at a modest level. While English makes it possible to travel at least cost (intellectual and practical), it cannot take the place of the traveller's curiosity, his desire to assimilate and penetrate the culture of the country he visits. How can one express the difference between

the person who knows only how to say "Good morning" in Tamil, Tagalog, Malayalam, Swahili or Quechua, and the one who says "Hi!" wherever he or she goes, believing the world is made in his or her image? One is exploring the planet, the other is just passing through. If language is the core of communication, then communication can work only if the words – and through them, the processes of thought – have a value precise enough to encompass the same idea with the different interlocutors.

Hugh Starkey⁹ for his part shows how "the democratic methods of teaching languages involve getting the students to talk to one another". This teacher, who has great experience of multiculturalism and multilingualism, sends his students, who come from all walks of life and have the most diverse mother tongues, out into the city of London where they conduct "surveys" to discover for themselves how society operates. When one realises that certain classes are made up of children of fifteen or twenty different races, it is easy to understand the value of such methods. Any modern education policy, serving the interests of human rights and preparing citizens for life in a multicultural society, owes it to itself to adopt multilingual education.

Educational curricula set up by a government based only on monolingualism contain no provision for the teaching of tolerance, for the opening of the mind and the understanding of one's neighbour, but do meet the need for a common language intelligible by all. Language is not only an instrument of communication; it reinforces identities in all their forms. As a result, the teaching of languages and then their use in daily life, have become politically sensitive matters. The development opportunities of minorities largely depend on the measures taken to undermine or

sustain minority languages. Hence there is a strong case for maintaining equilibrium and harmony between the teaching of an international vector language, that of the national language and that, as appropriate, of the mother tongue or dialect.

Civics and good citizenship

The practical aspect of education for democracy is essential because it represents both the objective and the path that must be trodden to achieve it. To quote Fatma Haddad-Chamakh:¹⁰ "An apprenticeship in democracy through school, extracurricular or similar activities (surveys, preparation of exhibitions, collections for charity, etc.) is necessary to provide a tangible base for education for democracy".

A decisive requirement is that education for democracy should be anchored in firm social reality. In many countries, the juridical construction of legislation is dissociated from economic, political and social reality. Democratic guarantees may exist even though they are eroded or even blocked by anti-democratic practices such as corruption, misuse of public funds, prevarication and other more violent forms of pressure. Consequently the content of education – of which we have considered only three aspects: religions, history and languages, although there are many others such as training in citizenship, geography, literature, and so on – should encompass subjects that deal with these problems.

There is no point in teaching the basic principles of democracy *ex cathedra*. Young people must also be taught how to handle power, should they accede to it later on.

There is no doubt that the construction of a democracy begins with education at school, but it continues with the learning of self-control at times when one holds authority. It is when a person accedes to power that the soundness of his attitudes and hence the authenticity of his democratic convictions can be judged.

In this connection the teaching of philosophy is fundamental since it involves, by definition, consideration of the systems of representing and apprehending the world, and its objectives are to train minds to be critical, recognise that there are a large number of viewpoints and determine them, and to utilise open discussion as the essential way in finding the truth.

Other higher education disciplines that are particularly suitable are anthropology and law, of which certain aspects could be introduced into secondary education, although without creating new subjects in a curriculum already overburdened in most countries. Education in civics, basic ideas of law, geography and history can lend themselves to introducing knowledge based upon anthropology. We have already spoken of physical education and sports as subjects likely to stimulate education for democracy. Indeed these disciplines, when placed in a co-operative rather than a competitive context, can encourage the formation of a team spirit, sexual equality, non-discrimination and the sharing of success.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that, quite apart from the role of school and college alone, the concept of education for democracy should be regarded as a process that develops throughout human life. Therefore adult education should have a dominant role – for example the training of parliamentarians and administrators, particularly in countries now moving towards democracy.

Civics and good citizenship, broadened to an international and universal dimension, are at the centre of education for democracy.

Finally, centres should be created to enable people, especially the young, to take part in sharing responsibilities and decision-making. These centres should be conceived as forums for discussion and action, aimed at producing citizens capable of exercising their rights and assuming their obligations. But if this is to come about, one must oneself set the example and give to society and its governing institutions a dignified and honourable image. Otherwise, as we are warned by La Fontaine:

“The frogs, fed up
of the democratic thing
complained so long
that Jupiter sent them a King”.¹¹

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III

WHERE AND WITH WHAT

If freedom could run its own affairs, that would be democracy

John Dos Passos

Our aim here is not to provide a teaching manual for education for democracy. As we have said, democracy is not a science. It is up to all educators individually to evaluate what should be taught, in the light of their own common sense and having regard to their own education and experience, the age of their pupils, how much they know, the teaching material they have available, and the social, political and cultural environment in which they are working. They have the delicate job of personally inventing the most suitable techniques for getting the democratic idea understood. If they have no facilities, they will need a great deal of imagination; if over-equipped (abundant computers and so on), a great deal of simplicity; tightly controlled by the bureaucracy, a great deal of independence; left to themselves, a great deal of wisdom.

Incidentally, the democratic operation of the educational system requires a continuous and repeated joint review (by teachers, the public authorities, parents, legal experts, and so on) of the relationships between:

- teachers and students: the rights and responsibilities of pupils and students will be defined by formalising class councils with organized representation;
- teachers, students and the administrative staff: the problems of managing the premises – canteen, health and safety, etc. – will be reviewed through regular meetings and consultations. The periodic review of the internal regulations will be the opportunity for all to exercise the democratic process; this will demonstrate that the regulations are in the public domain and are the subject of discussion with a view to improving social life itself;
- students in all age groups: between boys and girls, age groups, different types of education. This point must not be neglected: age, streaming – often too early – and specialization can lead later to exclusive attitudes.

Universalism and humanism

Although the school is unequalled as the place for learning about democracy, and as the first place where one discovers a much bigger and more diversified society than that of the family or the community, it must also be a social, racial and cultural crucible, while not being an instrument for levelling down.

As we have seen, there is not one truth but many truths, perhaps as many truths as there are people. It is preferable therefore for us to concentrate our efforts on humanism rather than on a theoretical universalism; bringing out all the richness and the various forms of thought,

however varied or exotic these may appear; resisting all temptation to uniformisation; preferring "the philosophy of science to scientism". We know from Immanuel Kant that the structures of the mind are universal and that its functioning satisfies categorical imperatives. It is worth remembering in this connection that the concept of universalism – which subsequently led to the idea of a system of social and political organization which would be equally valid for all and applicable anywhere in the world – as conceived not in Paris or in London, but in Königsberg.

True teachers of democracy will always bear in mind the fact that although the rules of good citizenship are the same for all, they will have to adapt to the particular traits of their students and teach them individually (when possible) rather than impose upon them a universal law, or intangible principles which they are likely to see as artificial. Teaching democracy is not simply a matter of showing young people how human beings resemble one another, but also how they differ.

In this sense the school must be a place for affective as well as cognitive education: learning democracy also means learning to control one's emotions. Hence the idea of broadening the school to encompass extracurricular activities.

It is important, in parallel with the courses, lessons, homework and other conventional educational activities, to give the school system a broader dimension than that of the curriculum alone and to give the young people a direct and practical opening upon the world. Putting on a play, carrying out a work project, forming an orchestra, visiting a factory and so on, are typical activities likely to stimulate a democratic attitude, the collective and united outlook, as much as reading a civics textbook.

Victor-Emmanuel Cabrita¹ illustrates these methods in the following way: "Education commences at a very early age. First, and above all, it is essential to give responsibility, for example by teaching children in nursery school to put away their pencils, close doors or water the plants. Children must be given the opportunity to take initiatives; training young people to have the courage to speak up, allowing them to express their opinion (indeed how can they participate in a democratic society without expressing an opinion?); teaching them how to deal with arguments and tensions in a wise and balanced manner; they must be shown how to develop a critical faculty".

For this purpose Cabrita, following the example of John Dewey,² introduced into his school a number of extracurricular teaching methods whose originality would upset more than one civil servant in more than one country. To take a single example: alongside the official curriculum, in school time, pupils at the first level organize a "Press Club": this involves sorting through the newspapers – unsold copies given free of charge by the wholesalers – so that they can develop a critical faculty with respect to news and the interpretation placed upon it by the media. "An unsold paper costs nothing, says Cabrita, and any school, even the most deprived, can do as we have done". It is by using this type of pragmatic method that the notion of teaching can be sublimed into that of education.

- The former involves the passing on of knowledge: languages, history and geography, education in civics;
- The latter involves the passing on of values (formation of attitudes and behaviour, acquisition of skills rather than knowledge, human dignity).

The national education systems in many countries should permit the development of such parallel and complementary systems, giving teachers a wider margin for manoeuvre and encouraging their initiatives. The lack of financial resources can always be compensated by imagination.

We all know that groups exist in schools, colleges and universities – teachers, administrators, supervisors, parent groups, trades unions, etc. – which do not always function in harmony with one another. Now harmony is one of the fundamental conditions for the satisfactory development of the mind, and should illustrate the democratic idea. A teacher of music is neither more nor less important than a teacher of philosophy, a head teacher or an employee in the tuckshop. The functions may be different but the dignity is equivalent. Bridges must be built between the teachers, the pupils, the administration, the supervisors and the families. To children, the sight of too complicated a hierarchy, which they do not necessarily understand, can be traumatic and can mislead them and condition their subsequent behaviour once and for all. If a school is to be the ideal place for education for democracy, it must set an example by the way in which it works.

Of course a hierarchy does have a far-reaching role to play and cannot be copied entirely from the operation of institutions. There are limits to what self-management can achieve if anarchy is to be avoided. It is certainly important to have management, rules and a minimum degree of discipline that is freely accepted by all as a factor for progress and success.

No-one will have forgotten the events of 1968 – no doubt a natural reaction to the inertia of the education system and the sclerosis of society – which resulted in total disorganization of colleges and universities. It is

unthinkable to put all these powers, for political or demagogic reasons, into the hands of student committees; replacing the teachers' knowledge and experience by the "revolutionary" enthusiasm of the students; it is even less thinkable to incite young people, at the age of rebellion, to turn against their teachers on the grounds that they are the symbol of oppression and ought to pay for all the anomalies, failures and misconceptions of society. Unfortunately such examples abound, where force, even going as far as massacres in certain countries, has been used by manipulated and coerced adolescents. Nobody is more malleable than a young person in the late teens and the responsibility of a teacher – who can transform the student into a lamb or a wolf – is considerable.

Even so, the increasing use of metal detectors, now routine at the school gate in certain major countries, or the free circulation of drugs on campuses, are particularly significant indicators of the sickness of a community, a society and a country. The fact that young people can go to school carrying a revolver or a syringe rather than textbooks and exercise books should cause us to think deeply about education for democracy. In many countries – whether they are industrialised or not – the development of violence, delinquency and prostitution – both inside and outside schools, and particularly around major cities in the most deprived districts – should be a reason for disquiet other than on the part of the media and be a more concrete item on governments' agendas. If a country's youth is sick, the whole of society is sick. It is then essential to reflect and try to understand. Those best able to answer these questions are clearly the teachers, who have dedicated their lives to educating future generations and who, being in continuous contact with students, know them

better, if not individually then at least collectively, than their own parents. It is then even more important that these teachers should themselves have been trained appropriately, that they should continuously question their own attitudes and improve themselves. "You, who teach the others, why not teach yourself as well?"³

Theory and practice

In parallel with the analysis and exegesis which are the daily bread of educational theoreticians, we shall try to illustrate this hiatus between the basic principles of education for democracy and reality in the classroom.

The Brazilian Jaerson Lucas Bezerra⁴ shows that it is anything but easy to teach democracy – indeed to teach anything at all – in countries where a considerable number of children live on the streets and turn to begging or delinquency simply to survive. "Only the children of the upper and middle classes go to school. The others have no money. The values of democracy are passed through non-governmental organizations, aid associations and district movements. There is a vast gulf between abstract, legal democratic structures and daily life. In our country, some have a mission, the others have a salary". In certain Latin-American countries, explains Bezerra, the teachers have to go on strike because of inadequate pay, but their pupils' families are even poorer than they are. How can this be explained to them? It is a vicious circle. There are certain circumstances in which education for democracy begins with social assistance.

François Kerdoncuf,⁵ for his part, observes that one of the world's major problems, so far unmastered, is that

posed by the ghettos, or suburbs: "We have no way of communicating with the young people who live in that world, these children without hope, uprooted, whose only way of expressing themselves is through violence. How can one talk about education for democracy when the first pressing need is to release them from the mechanisms that bring fear, insecurity and ignorance?" Out in the suburbs, college and high school students often avenge themselves by damaging school premises, using violence similar to that which they see outside the school. Their fear of unemployment, a feeling of injustice, the social exclusion of which they feel victims, trapped in cheap and poorly designed housing – with no place to meet and no leisure centre, where the "town centre", that essential and symbolic place, is most often the supermarket – resulting naturally in the rejection of society in all possible ways.

If the disease is to be cured, it must first be diagnosed. And Kerdoncuf emphasises the importance of the work to be done – in parallel with the school – in young workers' hostels, training centres and wherever the most deprived live. The educators, who can testify better than anyone to people's migrations, words and ideas, should beware of remaining aloof and should themselves move out from the privileged halls of education, their cosy institutions, to give leadership to deprived young people for whom learning a technique or skill is more important than a lecture on human rights. "For example, one can never repeat too often just what has been accomplished by agricultural colleges around the world".

Amongst the activities which can inculcate in young people the feeling of belonging to a community, and that they are contributing to developing democracy, we would mention:

- informal education;
- integration courses;
- leisure centres;
- vocational training.

All these activities generate or reinforce the idea of solidarity. It is isolation which leads to despair and possibly to delinquency.

Not training robots

One of the essential functions of education is to meet the needs of the different layers of the vocational hierarchy, in other words a social purpose. There is thus a risk of it creating machines. In certain of the more advanced countries, the school and university systems tend, from the earliest age, to programme the students, training them in precise tasks to the detriment of a general culture. Such a system represents a great danger to education for democracy.⁶ Indeed he or she who has never been taught even the elements of art, literature, history, geography, natural sciences, to say nothing of mathematics, physics or economics, can never have more than a limited understanding of the world. Unfortunately society has become a monster that devours skills, professions and specialities and, if one wishes to survive, it is more important to perform well in a specific and narrow area than to acquire that range of diversified knowledge which once constituted the education of the "honest man". This hyper-specialisation restricts the range of knowledge and as a result narrows the learning of tolerance and in no way benefits a training in democracy. In an ideal world

therefore, children and then adolescents would be taught simultaneously:

- knowledge and practical, specialised skills enabling them to function in society;
- a general structure of thought, a conceptual framework in which they can store and classify their knowledge;
- the enjoyable prospect of being able to learn ever more by showing them that the world – and life in it – is a continuous process of initiation with no limit.

The secret of universalism is deeply buried in each of us. Once again it is important to be able to ascend from the particular to the general and, with this in view, to be sufficiently free of material, family, religious and political constraints.

But in societies with increasing populations, rare are those who have the luxury of a general, humanist education encompassing the arts, science and law: it is essential, as quickly as possible, for a student to learn a trade, become skilled, competitive, productive, “leader of the field”, earn money, do everything possible to escape the threat of unemployment.

Thus we see consumerism replacing humanism. We also see science and technology experiencing a prodigious leap forward, unprecedented in the history of humanity – which should be the bearer of every hope since it is supposed to free the individual from tiresome or even degrading jobs – while we see the emergence – almost as quickly – of discouragement, moral distress and the loss of values.

We human beings, confused by that which we do not understand, are in the process of steadily improving our

knowledge of a very small number of things, and understanding less and less what they represent.

To be slightly pedantic, this is what one might call the "Leonardo da Vinci complex": being unable to soak up every discipline, not having the time to develop one's potential talent, to cultivate one's garden, being unable to explore the many fields of knowledge. No doubt a priceless frustration, but also an impression of giddiness faced with the onrush of history. Paradoxically, the development of knowledge has never quite played the role of vehicle for the ideas of tolerance and respect for human rights that one might have expected. Nor has it led to everybody's understanding the world better. On the contrary, now that knowledge is circumscribed within restricted specific fields and given over essentially to productivity, it is causing young people to turn to introspection and certain forms of selfishness, to the development of the notion of competition – which is not a bad thing in itself so long as it does not destroy that of solidarity and hence of democracy.

One good way of channelling this need for competition that is natural to young people is to highlight its aspect of emulation, stimulation and encouragement to excel oneself, something which is much more in the common interest than trying to impose the power of one's ego on others. In this context, "being the best" means getting the others to do better. Unfortunately there is no sign that this sort of attitude spreading either in schools, on the work-site, in business or in politics.

Ethnocentrism, egotism, the hypertrophy of the self, the concern for profit, the need to dominate and intolerance often hide behind the attitudes of competition. They are democracy's worst enemies.

“Trompe-l’œil” democracy

The immense hope generated by the virtually complete collapse of the communist regimes and the consequent end of the Cold War has now dissipated. Not only have the areas of conflict not disappeared, they have even multiplied. Released from the world balance of terror which the two opposing camps had instituted after the Second World War, people rediscovered their own nature with all its vanity, racism, political and religious intolerance, violence, corruption and so on.

In Eastern Europe, the disenchantment of those who had wagered everything on democracy is particularly marked because all their institutions, some of which operated perfectly well, were thrown away with the old system. As Mikolaj Kozakiewicz⁷ points out: “In our country we had courses on family relationships. It is regrettable that, on the pretext of rooting out communism, they should have been stopped”. These courses provided excellent training in democratic behaviour, in that they taught people how better to manage the lines of force actually in the home.

In transitional situations, the revenge of the private on the public sector can have harmful consequences and lead to excess, precisely in the same way as the revenge of the public on the private sector. Valeri Pivovarov⁸ is saying the same thing when he shows how “democratic education has to immunise people against excessive aspirations”. Learning how to resolve conflicts – at school, within the family and in the social and working life – is not a matter of destroying everything built up in the past, even if the regimes have changed, but to draw lessons from it. When the Russian revolution began, many

experiments were tried, such as rural self-management, and it would be interesting today to benefit from some of these lessons from the past, rather than trying purely and simply to wipe them out.

For example the creation of school councils, made up of students, teachers, parents and representatives of local authorities, can give excellent results, so long as these councils do not produce "authoritarian schemes". In many Eastern countries, the introduction of non-directive structures will be costly, not only in terms of money but also of time. Grants from Western organizations are not sufficient to change attitudes. Indeed one might even say that aid to the democratic transition in the form of foreign grants is likely to have a harmful side the consequences of which are as yet unknown.

The collision between the two older models of society and their mutual discovery is still far from being settled. What may a national of a country which guarantees easy and free access to all medical care think of another country where one can obtain health care only in proportion to one's bank balance?

According to Pivovarov: "Most human beings do not reject conflict and differences, but the form they take on". The whole problem lies in teaching them to express themselves, to exchange ideas, to contradict openly, when they are not used to such things. The *apparatchik* or director who is "always right" and imposes his or her will by force if necessary, must be replaced by small, diversified multifunctional working parties within which people will learn to ask questions and even to question themselves. "Since we are human beings with a limited capacity for communicating our knowledge and thoughts, the only way in which we can enrich ourselves is to ask one another questions".

A pilot project has been started in Moscow which consists of forty hours of courses on these subjects (democracy, settling conflicts, human rights, etc.), aimed at small groups to which each member can contribute. Such projects are extremely encouraging.

On leaving school

Education for democracy is a continuing process and cannot be confined within educational space-time. It goes on as long as life goes on. Let us now follow César Birzea⁹ and leave school to briefly consider other places, ways and means for teaching democracy:

- the family unit;
- peer groups;
- communities.

The family unit is the environment in which children meet authority for the first time: their parents. This authority – although not always aware of elementary teaching methods, nor necessarily competent to teach democracy in a “technical” way – may “either enhance school education or divert its influence by taking a different attitude, sometimes opposed to that cultivated by the school”. Ideally, therefore, parents should be trained in democratic attitudes: neither too authoritarian nor too lax, they should treat the children as themselves, and get them to take an active part in family life; giving them tasks and responsibilities without exploitation; enabling them to play a full part in the organic unit that constitutes a home.

The structures of the family, the division of authority

and the sharing of functions vary considerably from one country to another, and this is not the place to discuss the relative merits of the patriarchal or matriarchal systems, or those of absolute tolerance compared with constraints and a domestic hierarchy. However, some boundaries are necessary to prevent physical violence or drudgery, practices that are unfortunately still widespread. It is by educating adults in children's rights as well as in those of human rights that one may hope to eliminate such practices.

In certain cases, society has a duty to interfere in the private affairs of a family through social assistance or even by recourse to justice followed by sanctions: it is unacceptable anywhere for parents to enslave their offspring for their own profit or to compensate for their own shortcomings. However, quite apart from this duty of interference, society also has a duty of education. For example, strict family planning can put a stop to the phenomenon of overpopulation, reduce the number of large families and thus prevent them from falling into the mental distress that invariably results from material misery. Family planning is also a form of education for democracy.

Secondly, "peer groups are highly influential, particularly during puberty and adolescence, when learning by imitation predominates.¹⁰ Young people become more receptive to the behaviour of their friends than to that of their teachers or to the advice of their parents, which fairly often they dispute. This field holds out little possibility of intervention, because friendships and groups form spontaneously. "Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are", says an old proverb. But such links are as much the result of circumstance as of natural attraction and it is not easy, if one wishes to avoid elitism and ostracism which are contrary to the

democratic outlook, to protect one's pupil or child from harmful influences.

Thirdly, "communities have an enormous educational potential: they can become veritable schools for civics and solidarity".¹¹ Associations, co-operatives, cultural and religious groups, sports clubs and local communities bring together people with varied experience and motivation. It is here, too, that one learns to obey the rules of cohabitation, take part in collective activities and pursue objectives adopted by the majority. This kind of participatory life occurs naturally in country villages: the smaller the community, the easier it is for it to become a democracy. In large cities on the other hand, where anonymity rules, an associative life is essential to break out of the isolation that affects many city-dwellers. Those who spend twenty years in the same block of flats without ever having the opportunity to speak to their neighbour, those whose family is scattered – as often happens in the industrial and post-industrial societies – are democratically disabled. To prevent such people from withdrawing into themselves and, cut off from the community, adopting individualistic attitudes – consequently anti-democratic – the government, the country, the region, the municipality and any other institution having competence and authority in managing social life should take all possible steps to encourage associative activities in the city:

- making premises available to communities;
- developing local activities;
- initiating street activities such as concerts and shows;
- bringing the school out of isolation and involving it in the neighbourhood;
- protecting young people.

The world and the media

One of the greatest changes affecting the world roughly since the Second World War is the dizzying development of means of communication. Television, radio, telephone, fax, satellite links, video conferencing, air travel, computer databanks, and so on are all technological tools that are now fundamentally transforming our access to knowledge. Or perhaps we should say: access to information. In the mountains of Papua-New Guinea or in the extreme south of Tierra del Fuego, in the far north of Canada or in Asia Minor, the same messages are received at virtually the same instant. A few large press agencies and a few radio and television stations now control world information, to the extent that the national and local media depend entirely on them for the "latest world news", in other words, what is going on elsewhere.

Through the media, the world is discovering itself. This unprecedented revolution is the source of both hope and concern. On the one hand, the electronic media are unequalled vehicles – valuable educational auxiliaries. They can take the place of teachers and lecturers wherever there are none, or not enough. In many countries, educational programmes are broadcast by radio and television, enabling those who live in the most remote areas to learn free of charge, and the poorest countries to save on several hundred teachers. Knowledge penetrates the home as never before. To learn a language or any other subject, to pick up ideas of agriculture or learn music, all you need is a radio set. This method is widely used in India for example, but also in Africa and Australia. It is easy to see that it is an outstanding instrument for education and progress which encourages the development of

intelligence and culture, and hence that of the democratic attitude.

At the same time, the audiovisual media broadcast "news" and know no frontiers. In this they play a substantial role, so important that it worth examining carefully. The saying "what is written down is true, because it is written" has now turned into "what I heard on the radio or saw on the television is true, because I heard it or saw it". This reflex conclusion is rooted in history. Until recently it involved ascribing a holy character, a sense of infallibility, to the written word. One does not argue with the tablets of the law.

The audiovisual media have now taken over, and their power is incredible. They fulfil the magic function which was once that of the ritual ceremonies of passing on knowledge, and can lead entire peoples to extreme forms of behaviour as happened in the United States on that famous day when Orson Welles announced on the radio that the Martians had arrived.

The manipulation of news, disinformation, news that is untrue or taken out of context, are as harmful to democracy in the countries where the media are manifold, as the control of news by a single party in those countries where this pluralism does not exist. It is good to have the freedom to buy several newspapers of different sensibilities or to watch television programmes that are not under the control of a regime.

Democracy means first having a choice. Thus young people will have to be taught to judge for themselves, in complete freedom, offering them the elements of comparison: there are always newspapers other than the one read by the father or equivalent. "A news item can be neutral, objective and aim only to improve the mind through

education. It can also be biased, filtering the facts and retaining only some of them ... In most cases partial and biased news is supplemented by some emotional action".¹²

On the other hand, one is bound to note that newspapers and the audiovisual media – supposed to be independent but actually controlled by a financier, a multinational, a pressure or interest group – are no more reliable than those which transmit the thoughts of a dictator or party. The way in which many of the Western media reported the Gulf War was extremely revealing in this connection. "Newspapers and television commented abundantly on the accidental death of half a dozen soldiers of the allied forces; virtually nobody spoke about the 100,000-odd Iraqi civilians killed by the bombing".¹³ This was another illustration of how the value of human life varied according to whether one was on the "good" or "bad" side at a particular moment in history.

However there are so many examples of disinformation, deliberate or otherwise, through simple ignorance or malevolence, through incompetence or corruption, that a whole book would be needed to list them. The truth is that no organ of the press, no radio station and no television channel can be truly independent, since their survival depends directly either on the political authorities or on national or international finance.

A sad fact for democracy

To quote Marc Ferro: "The media live in the here and now". Many journalists, under time pressure, preoccupied with the need to do better than their competitors, to get a "scoop", to become famous – and indeed deprived of the

slightest detachment from events, having no possibility of situating them in an historical, more general background which would make them intelligible – are often the source of misinformation in substance or in form. The profession of journalist should be based upon very comprehensive training, ending in an examination assessing general knowledge (history, geography, politics, sociology, economics, and so on). It is going too far to allow the “fourth estate” to interfere and even impose itself in the formation of minds, and even the future of societies, without obtaining a minimum of moral guarantees and professional skills on the part of those who now make the rules. In some countries, the director of a television channel may be more important and have more influence than the Prime Minister. In others, the latter is enslaved by the former. Both cases are anti-democratic.

Just as one can manipulate history, one can falsify the news. Once this is understood, one of the primary steps in education for democracy will be to train children – as well as the adults:

- to question what they read, hear and see;
- always to ask themselves what is credible and what is not;
- to form a personal view;
- to discuss it with others.

A journalist is neither a guru nor a prophet, and rarely an expert, but the employee of a company wanting to sell the maximum number of copies of its newspaper, to gain the best listening figures for its radio, or to attract the largest possible number of viewers. In democracy, the faculty of commentating should be individual.

We believed that this long disquisition on the media was essential in view of the gradual slide of the public authorities from the hands of competent teachers, suitably trained and trustworthy, into those of publicists who take it upon themselves to condition behaviour, while in fact they should be no more than a sounding board for events. However to sum up, we have seen that the place for education for democracy is not only the schools, colleges and universities, because today there are no longer any closed universes. Everything is now in communication and the worlds of education, the family, community life, the media and life at work are closely bound up. "One can therefore understand," prophesied Bergson, "that humankind has come late to democracy. Of all political concepts, it is in fact the one most remote from nature, the one which transcends – at least in intention – the conditions of the 'closed society'. It assigns human beings inviolable rights. If these rights are to remain inviolate, then all must be constantly faithful to their duty. Thus it is based upon an ideal individual, who respects others as himself or herself".¹⁴

Adult education

The review of these few questions relating to education for democracy would not be complete without a mention of adult education and, particularly, that of the educators themselves. As Paul Valéry said: "Education is not limited to childhood and adolescence nor is it limited to schools. Our whole life and environment is our educator, and a strict and dangerous one".¹⁵ In order to ensure the prevalence of the development of interdependent,

lasting and democratic societies with respect for law, social, economic and political justice, the individual, peace and active participation in decision-making, it is essential not only to train young people in democratic values, but also to provide adults with educational tools to develop their capability for action faced with critical general issues.

In the first place we shall stress the importance of training the teachers. Their responsibilities in the gradual formation of young minds, their moral influence, and their intellectual power are beyond measure. An attitude, one lesson, even a simple remark, gesture, criticism or comment can leave indelible traces in the mind of a child or adolescent. An undeserved punishment, a school friend unjustly privileged, a subject given a sketchy or biased treatment, or an iniquitous value judgement, are all psychological events that leave a profound trace in the unconscious and, when they re-emerge years later, may well cause disturbances of greater or less seriousness. Psychoanalysis teaches us that Oedipus also applies with the teacher, who is another sort of father. Thus teachers must be very carefully prepared for their profession – the university and training colleges are suitable places – but it is equally essential that throughout their careers they should be offered continuous training, refresher courses, continuous follow-up by educational inspectors or advisory teachers, meetings, discussions and conferences with their peers, and specialist books. A teacher, more than anyone else, must demonstrate moral qualities.

Secondly, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are working around the world for adult education. More than a hundred of these organizations are federated

in the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)¹⁶ which works in close co-operation with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Economic and Social Council, UNICEF, and so on. In seventy-seven countries, the organizations dedicated to adult education are involved with:

- popular education;
- the education of women;
- peace and human rights;
- literacy programmes;
- indigenous peoples;
- developmental research.

Their activities are extremely varied and substantially cover the field of education for democracy. Amongst other things, they organize seminars and conferences¹⁷ whereby they communicate with one another and interpenetrate. The ICAE has a resource centre which holds international material on adult education and publishes the Convergence magazine which serves as a world-wide debating platform for discussion and exchange of experience in informal education. The structures of adult education can be the place to learn about a citizen's rights and duties and for the introduction to decision-making and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in educational systems that teach openness and the giving of responsibility to the individual. It is important that the associations should be able to communicate with one another.

To illustrate the particularly important work done by the NGOs and other structures based upon civil society we shall take a single example from many others: that of Colombia. Gloria Tereza Bohorquez¹⁸ reports on

the activities of trades unions, foundations and interest groupings which participate, in that country, in education campaigns concerned with the constitution, human rights, the rights of communities, child protection and the fundamental values of democracy. The *Vive le Citoyen* campaign was intended to stimulate the basic organizations and underprivileged people to become aware of their status as citizens, through programmes of social communication and organized participatory work. Educational material was supplied to more than three hundred schools, which they used to draw up – with everybody involved – “agendas for co-existence”, defining the rules of openness, respect for one’s neighbour, non-violence, recognition of religious, cultural, ethnic and political differences. The UNESCO associated colleges are also working in this direction and make it easier to apply new teaching techniques by establishing opportunities for reflection. Informal education, in the many forms it can take (social and professional induction courses, cultural training) certainly offers fertile ground for the democratic debate. Of course it is essential to be extremely prudent and ensure that the organizations and associations that are doing so are neither infiltrated nor taken over by pressure groups motivated by one or other form of sectarianism. Adults, being less malleable than children, also have more power. The will and determination of individuals is at the heart of the debate on education for democracy. Here we might note this phrase of Joseph Joubert: “Education is not only a matter of ornamenting the memory and illuminating understanding; above all it should be concerned with controlling the will”.¹⁹

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CONCLUSION

Only the ignorant mistrust education

Publilius Syrus

As we conclude this examination of the objectives, content, place and means of education for democracy, we inevitably find ourselves torn between a feeling of frustration and one of hope. On the one hand, nobody can aspire to list democratic ideas or claim to be a "dispenser of ideas" in this field; on the other hand, one has a confused feeling that the various recent events around the world are converging towards our improved understanding of one another. Moreover the lesson of history is perhaps the one we have from d'Alembert: "For my part I believe that one must always teach the truth to people and that there is never any advantage in deceiving them".¹

The frustrations

Our academics seeking for democracy had invented nothing, but had rather identified sets of problems and difficulties. We noted that the universal panacea, the miracle recipe to get young people and their elders alike

to understand the democratic message had still not been found; that there were only positions of last resort or isolated solutions that differed between countries, races and regions. Some people expected everything from UNESCO: that it should increase the number of the associated colleges – a programme whose success is well known and which attracts many applications – that it should fund new projects, provide teaching material, produce a *manual of democracy*, an *exhaustive history of humanity*, audio and video cassettes to help teach the principles of good citizenship, human rights, and the rights of women and children and of the democratic system. Other people, on the contrary, thought that the answers were purely local and that the involvement of international organizations in the affairs of a country should be restricted to its lowest level: that of a forum for exchanging information on education. In fact these diverging views are the heart of the problem.

Nation-states collapse under two kinds of pressure: lateral pressures, in the form of different waves which submerge the traditional world – means of communication, organized crime, drug abuse, migration, religious fundamentalism, pollution, the renewed rise of nationalism and regionalism – and vertical pressures, from the supranational institutions which are tending to go beyond their simple co-ordinating role to exercise wider powers which can even give rise – for example according to decisions taken by the UN Security Council – to direct armed intervention in certain countries.

So what is the democratic solution? To hand over world management to a multinational authority or to leave countries to settle their own affairs?

Signs of hope

"The end of this century," says Guy Hermet, "is marked by the disappearance of the meta-historical ideologies".²

Some people deplore this state of affairs and fear the establishment of a "world order" that will eliminate identities and level out cultures. However, according to Hennet "the "great agreement" is a totalitarian idea". Conflict is a natural process; each of us has traditions, customs and characteristics. "Somebody who had no point of disagreement with another person would go mad", says Marc Ferro. It would be senseless to try to build a society without conflict, so long as this remains verbal and does not degenerate into armed dispute. Democracy is a forum for reconciliation, not a super-government.

The disappearance of East-West confrontation also eliminates a major handicap to the evolution and development of humankind. The absurd division of the world into two parts will gradually give way to a pluralist system, that conforms more with human nature and is more suited to the interests of democracy. However, as a result of these events, regional conflicts have reappeared and we are now entering a long and difficult period of transition, during which the human race will have to institute the mechanisms of "good government", possibilities of action that are acceptable to all and – via the international organizations, through multilateral or bilateral links, through non-governmental organizations, or through cultural and scientific exchanges – find new ways of co-existing. The road is paved with good intentions, and is likely to be rough; however it is the only practicable way. The first steps along this road involve learning to put up with one another. Later progress will show

people how they can live together and then, perhaps, how they can love one another.

People thought they could liberate human nature by teaching us maxims. They taught us thoughts but not how to think. Now other people's thoughts are useless to democracy, unless one has put forth the individual effort to assimilate them and practise them in daily life. Democracy implies the formation of participating citizens, who possess self-awareness, who rise up against excess, whenever necessary; but who do not allow themselves to be drawn into revolutionary movements, radical action, often for instinctive and uncontrolled reasons.

The principal feature of democratic citizens is moderation of judgement. After identifying themselves as subjects under the law, they have taken on the notion of free will. Sceptical in politics, measured in their opinions, they keep their enthusiasm for democracy intact. They talk about and criticise the institutions, but defend them if they are threatened. While keeping somewhat aloof from the party battles, they participate in public life, believe in the importance of the vote and try to take part in decision-making. They recognise their neighbours as equals, accepting that the latter's identity is as valuable as their own. They carry with them the sense of sharing, not as a good feeling, but as a necessity: solidarity is of benefit both to those who receive and to those who give. Thus a widespread campaign in French schools and colleges in 1993 with the objective of collecting rice for Somalian children, probably did contribute to giving these children more to eat, but also taught the French children that elsewhere in the world there were situations of famine and misery that they knew nothing about. "How", asks Hermet, "can we build a more stable world without inculcating the desire to share around the globe?"

Is a “world culture” possible?

To go back to the beginning – as in any process of reflection – we reach the point of wondering whether education is compatible with democracy, and of asking ourselves the basic questions once again. If these have not been resolved, at least they have been identified.

- How can the top educate the bottom, other than to ensure that the bottom legitimizes the top? In other words: how can education be democratic?
- Education favours democracy, for all the reasons we have shown, but one can also learn integrism and totalitarianism at school.
- Raising standards of living helps the development of democracy, but countries that are rich and dictatorial do exist, and others are poor and democratic.
- Liberty is one of the essential values of democracy, but children can be left to learn values of intolerance in its name. Should the watchword therefore be that there is “no liberty for the enemies of liberty”?
- In the countries said to be “in transition to democracy” the situation is urgent. This transition must take place quickly, otherwise there will be painful returns to the past. However, education bears its fruits only slowly: it needs a minimum of fifteen years. Although political life can be hurried, occasionally through the use of force, consciences cannot be forged as quickly. Democracy, by definition, cannot be imposed. It is the result of a long maturing process.

- Education is sometimes confused with instruction. The latter can undermine democracy if, instead of awakening all the faculties of solidarity, tolerance, understanding and non-violence, it is used as a means of inducing authoritarianism, iniquity and mistrust.
- The democratic sentiment must come from within. It is a conviction rather than part of knowledge. Consequently it cannot really be taught. Perhaps, at the very most, it can be passed on. As Federico Mayor says: “It is when we are ourselves that we are complete citizens. When one is forced to choose a particular way, when there is only one possibility, this is not democracy”.³
- The teaching of history has hitherto consisted mainly in imposing a national identity, in other words strengthening nationalism. Democracy is against any co-ordination of the resources of aggression, and in favour of harmonising energies for the collective well-being. To use the expression of Guy Hermet: “The beings of the imagination must be made to communicate”, we must invent a different method of teaching history in order to initiate children to multiplicity.
- Democracy is based upon equal rights for the majority and the minority or minorities. They are a threat to one another and, although the majority often snuffs out the minorities, it can happen that the latter destabilise the former. The equilibrium is fragile and everyone must continually help to maintain it.
- Millions of people expect everything from democracy, as if it was the panacea, the magic wand to resolve all

their problems. On the contrary: democracy is uncertainty, relativity, diversity, continuous change, the development of forces and understanding, the complete opposite of a fixed political system, whether constraining or providing security. Paradoxically, it is much less secure than totalitarianism.

Thus we must learn to “master the dream”. Democracy may well don its finest apparel in order to seduce. But in fact it is difficult to grasp, so captive are we held by our passions. How then can it be taught? “The art of teaching is none other than that of awakening the curiosity of young minds, in the hope that it will satisfy them later” as noted Anatole France. Once again we may repeat that democracy is a concept and not a model. In speaking of democracy, one speaks of fundamental values, pillars on which one must oneself build one’s own edifice, in line with one’s cultural profile, identify, history and potential. Earlier we have worked in uniformity and simplicity. And here is democracy meaning living with complexity. Are we capable of giving lessons to our children about something we have never been able to fully achieve ourselves?

Democracy works on the relationships between individuals and between groups. It depends on the meaning one gives to one’s own life and to the destiny of one’s group. But groups mix, move on and interpenetrate; the new deal is once again obscure.

“The men and women of today must look in two directions: first to their neighbour and then to the future. I do not like being an archaeologist, I like being the figure-head. We are not responsible for the past; however, we must unravel it to learn its lessons”.⁴ Unfortunately memory is fragile, limited and transient. At the same time,

as basic mechanisms of the human mind, these capabilities of storing and then passing on information should be incomparable gems, intimately linked to the difference between homo sapiens and the animals, to our free will, our ability to counteract entropy, in converting chaos into order.

Some people are afraid that we have moved from the "heritage history" to the "adventure history", their concerns stemming from the sudden questioning of the certainties, faiths and convictions which supported their lives. The myth of the "golden age" is not about to disappear. But is it not preferable to try to draw together the elements of hope to reconstitute the links between people, groups and nations in a different way, rather than wringing one's hands over the decay of the old systems?

Just as land, since ancient times, has meant wealth, just as the means of production represented wealth in the industrial era, today knowledge is revealed as the wealth of people and countries. The "advanced" societies are characterised by an exponential development of knowledge, which has become the very basis of our culture. This so-called "post-modern" culture is accompanied by a substantial gap between those who hold the knowledge and those who have no access to it. This phenomenon, which at first sight may appear as a threat to democracy, does in fact carry hope, because knowledge is more easy to share than land or factories.

Gaining access to the same knowledge as that of one's neighbours is not the same as appropriating their garden by force, depriving them of their goods, extending one's own power to their detriment. The wider circulation of knowledge can, on its own, preserve humanity from disputes of interest and even armed conflict.

Indeed, having regard to the multiplication of the means of communication, the free circulation of information, nobody can now confiscate knowledge for his or her own profit. Education, the vector of knowledge, will one day perhaps relegate the guns and warplanes, the vectors of death, to the status of bad memories.

Democracy will come into its own. Let us teach it to our children. But let us teach it without ever forgetting this aphorism of André Gide: "A good teacher has this constant care: to teach the pupil to do without the teacher".⁵

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Can democracy be taught? If it can, what should be the objectives and content of such education? Where and how should it be provided? How is it possible to educate the public while fostering a critical approach and preserving cultural identities?

After reviewing the problems of giving instruction in citizenship, and the difficulties of teaching religion, moral values, history, languages and civics, the author goes on to consider adult education, and the educative roles of the media and the social and professional world.

Is it possible, in a changing world where traditional standards are disappearing, to construct a universal ethic?

Has the philosophy of enlightenment become dimmed? Is democracy no more than an illusion?

These are the questions Philippe Augier raises in this book which is aimed not only at educators but also at all who are concerned to promote democratic standards of behaviour, respect for human rights, and peace between nations.