teaching of leisure activity. Arts and sports do not fit the classroom curriculum, but they are part of the school curriculum. One way that the classroom can contribute to sport and art is by teaching intelligent spectatorship. Being a spectator may not be as satisfying as being a performer but, especially later in life, it can be a valuable part of leisure activity.

To whatever extent it can, the school should provide for artistic and athletic performances. The amount and variety of both should depend on individual choice, but the activities should be available. These things are not frills on a young person’s education; they add a necessary complement to the work of the classroom. The form of a basketball team on the court is a teacher. So are the keys on a piano. The young person will usually need some “coaching” along with the nonverbal teacher. A coach will use a rich mixture of teaching languages. Sometimes a little lecturing and preaching may be needed; sometimes forgiving and comforting are necessary. This metaphor of coaching for the purpose of reflecting on teaching will receive more comment in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Teaching in School

The question of school reform has generated a library full of books. Proposals for change have been constant in the United States since the founding of the public school system in the 1840s. The number of reform packages has probably reached a new high since the early 1980s. The most obvious cause for the intense recent interest is U.S. economic competitiveness with Japan, Germany, and other countries.

This chapter does not attempt to compete with proposals that offer a detailed blueprint of how public schools should operate. Much of the economic, political, social, and racial complexity is beyond my scope here. However, I do think that this chapter might contribute to the discussion by offering several clear distinctions. Clarity can sometimes simplify. Behind all the details of complex proposals to improve schools is someone’s assumptions about what constitutes a school and what are its proper activities.

I have approached the question of school by asking, “What is the meaning of ‘to teach’?” That journey led up to the previous chapter, which sets teaching within four major forms of lifelong and lifewide education. Classroom teaching is one of those four forms. The form of classroom teaching exists in relation to forms of teaching outside the school. In addition, classroom teaching is related to other forms of teaching within the school. That is, the task of this chapter is not to describe “school teaching,” but to describe the configuration of teaching forms that a typical school can house.

Many of the books on school reform have thoughtful, exciting, and detailed proposals. But what usually does not get asked is the nature of teaching. In most of these books, the reader is not likely to find a page, let alone a chapter, asking the question, “What does it mean to teach someone something?” The question and an answer are, of course, implied. I can understand that documents largely political and
institutional in nature need not always ask philosophical and linguistic questions. Still, teaching is at the center of the school; teaching is also an act that is regularly obscured in educational discussions. If we come to the question of school reform with some clarity about the nature of teaching, we might be able to have a clearer outline of the school. Debate about school reform would be based on a firmer understanding of the limits of a school and what kinds of activity do and do not belong within those limits.

What a School Is

Any "vision" of a reformed school needs to be grounded in what "school" has been in the past and what it realistically could be in a few years. Reform books are often cast either in utopian programs of progress or in apocalyptic announcements that time is running out. People who work in schools often feel battered by what they perceive to be the latest fad — a new piece of machinery, a new management technique, or a new testing device. The great new reform often comes across in the form of a slogan or an acronym. At the back of the room, someone is usually muttering "we tried that in 1970 (or 1960, or 1950)." But even the schoolteacher who just wishes to close the classroom door and get on with the lesson plan knows that drastic changes have been occurring in the world surrounding the school. How much and in what ways should the school be changing in response?

Schools cannot pretend that videotape, computers, high-tech industries, and an interlocking world economy do not exist. No modern invention or interest should in principle be excluded from the school. But there is a debatable issue of how to incorporate "relevancy" to the contemporary world without obscuring or destroying the fragile institution of school. If "school" is the name of a single place with a limited time, then reformers have to keep in view the simple outline of the school when new things are suggested. If something is being added, what will be subtracted?

Herbert Klieberd, in his excellent history of school curriculum, notes that "one major function of life adjustment education was its emphasis on the indefinite expansion of the scope of the curriculum." The intention was for the school to face "real-life problems," but theorists have to face the fact that the curriculum cannot indefinitely expand. The at-
rect the child’s education. And very quickly educational language was absorbed into psychological language. By 1900, John Dewey was already trying to correct what he thought was a new misplacement of emphasis. As someone who was identified with the new psychology, Dewey was assumed to be on the side of the child. However, in *The Child and the Curriculum*, he insisted that the center of the school is not the child but the relation between child and curriculum. By 1930, Dewey had dissociated himself from the Progressive Education Association’s program of child-centered education. In one of his last books on education in 1937 he was still trying to make his point when people were attributing to him whatever was being done in the name of child-centered education.

Dewey never succeeded in extricating himself from the widespread perception that he wished to place the child at the center of the school. The author of a recent book quotes Dewey as saying that “the child is the starting point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard.” The author then comments on this passage: “In theory, this ideal is unattainable. In practice, it has proved largely unattainable.” The words quoted are in fact those of Dewey but they are a description of the theory he was assailing. It is not that our problem has been putting the theory into practice. Dewey’s contention was that the theory is wrong.

Why is a position that Dewey was at pains to deny for more than forty years still attributed to him? His express intention was to interrelate “child” and “curriculum,” but he could not overcome the limitations of his beginning terms. I think he would have fared much better if he had distinguished among the curriculum of education, the curriculum of the school, and the curriculum of the classroom. In addition, he should not have assumed that “student” and “child” are interchangeable.

John Dewey never developed a theory of teaching. It is amazing that in his major educational treatise, *Democracy and Education*, he seldom uses the verb “to teach.” When he does, he nearly always refers to what schoolteachers (“educators”) do. Education is assumed to be what children receive in a classroom.

To this day most books on school reform begin by assuming a classroom is a place for older people to instruct children or youth. It is understandable that a writer may wish to concentrate on the high school or the elementary school. But even to analyze either of those settings one is not helped by assuming that a classroom is a place for older people to instruct children. The meaning of teaching is seldom explored when one assumes that the teacher/learner relation is a variation on adult/child. In contrast, the question of the nature of teaching will very likely be raised if the teacher can be the same age or younger than the students.

Within the configuration of educational forms, the classroom has a special, but not exclusive, relation to young people. Classroom learning belongs to every age. Some reflective and literate knowledge is best learned between the ages of 6 and 16. Many other things are better learned later in life. Our university and community college population now embody a great diversity of age. Nothing helps a classroom discussion by 18-year-olds like the presence of some 40- or 70-year-old students. Beyond the university, tens of millions of people in the United States are involved every day in courses, seminars, and workshops.

The phrase “schools and universities” has the effect of keeping schools equated with children. A preferable way of speaking is to include universities within the meaning of school. Students often do experience a big difference when they move from the twelfth to the thirteenth grade, especially in living arrangements. However, the continuity of the classroom experience should not be overlooked. The United States could profit from a closer relation of primary, secondary, and tertiary schooling. The ones who might learn the most from this relation would be university professors, who often reflect little on the nature of classroom instruction. They do their research and give their lectures, assuming that is what it means to teach. But teaching in a classroom is a special kind of teaching that a university professor ought to learn by watching someone who does it well.

There are places in John Dewey’s writings where he suggests that education is not exclusively for children. His test of good education is that it stimulates the desire to get more education. On that basis, education (including classroom teaching) should never cease. Dewey also warns against assuming that adults and children are opposites when it comes to matters of dependence. In that framework, teaching would not be mistaken for a child’s dependence on an adult. Dewey also has intriguing comments on teaching by indirection: the teacher influences the student by altering the physical and social environment. But because Dewey has no overall theory of teaching, it is quite possible to read his writings with one’s assumption undisturbed that teaching consists in professional educators telling things to children.

The other direction to school reform — social reconstructionism —
is also traceable back to Dewey's writings at the turn of the century. This movement reached a high point during the economic hard times of the 1930s. When Dewey broke from the child-centered movement, he aligned himself with the movement to reform the social order. The phrase "social reconstruction" is not heard much these days, but the school is still often asked to solve the problems of society: AIDS, racism, drugs, war, traffic deaths, pollution. The school is asked to confront "real-life problems."

In his Pedagogic Creed, Dewey wrote, "I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform." If by "education" is meant a lifelong and lifelong interaction of social forms, then indeed one would look to education, as opposed to violence, for transforming the social order. But if by "education" one really means school, and by school one assumes a place for 6-10-year-olds, then burdening "education" with the task of reconstructing society is unrealistic. John Dewey did not invent the equating of education with schools for children, but neither did he free himself from that assumption.

Dewey's comments on the role of teacher are especially revealing and unrealistic. He ends his Pedagogic Creed with the statement: "The teacher is the true prophet, the usherer in of the Kingdom of God." If Dewey really meant teacher here and not schoolteacher, then the statement would be defensible. The great revolutions of history have been brought on by teachers: Moses and Confucius, Jesus and Socrates, Newton and Einstein, Jefferson and Lincoln. However, Dewey regularly refers to "teacher" when he means "schoolteacher." Asking a schoolteacher — of children — to lead a social revolution is to lay an unfair burden on both schoolteachers and schoolchildren. Schools, especially those with students of all ages, can make a definite contribution to social progress, but only if schools are protected from being wielded as political instruments.

Dewey's alignment with the social reconstructionists of the 1930s was short-lived. He was not prepared to go the route of some other reformers in involving the school in social activism. While he regularly refers in Education and Experience to "real-life experience," by which he seems to mean a continuity between in-school and out-of-school experiences, he still appreciated the school as a place of academic study.

The conflict between reformers was brought to a head in a provocative little book by George Counts: Dare the Schools Build a Better Social Order? The question for Counts was not "Can the schools do it?" but "Are the schoolteachers daring enough?" For Counts, "Progressive Education cannot place its trust in a child-centered school"; instead, it must "become less frightened than it is today at the bogies of imposition and indoctrination." For Dewey, that dismissive attitude to the real problem of indoctrination was too much to take. In 1937, he wrote, "It is unrealistic, in my opinion, to suppose that the schools can be a main agency in producing intellectual and moral changes... which are necessary for the creation of a new social order."

By the end of the 1930s, therefore, school reform had two opposing parties. Both could claim lineage to John Dewey, but only he had repudiated both. It is almost the trademark of great thinkers that they are misunderstood in opposite directions. Dewey tried to take down the wall separating school and nonschool worlds. But in the absence of consistent distinctions between school and education, the result is not a dialogue of educational forms but an engulfment of school by the nonschool world. Even more seriously, in the absence of a theory of teaching, the schoolteacher is either told to get out of the way so that children can grow up or else is hectored to tell the whole world how to live.

I have approached the meaning of "school" by describing in previous chapters the forms and languages of teaching. A school is a distinct location where people step back from ordinary concerns to concentrate upon learning something. Almost any kind of learning could be housed within the school's borders, but the most likely candidates are those forms of teaching-learning that are valued by the group and require the leisure of space and time. Schools throughout the centuries have generally provided two forms of learning: first, knowledge of a scientific or philosophical kind; second, a learning how to do the tasks required to sustain the particular society. This latter form of learning refers to "work" in the full range of its meaning, including labor, art, sport, and religion. The modern school is still a place for either or both of these forms of learning.

**Forms of Schoolteaching**

Before commenting on the division of the school into its two main learning forms, we should notice a form of teach-learn that is the backdrop for these two. The very existence of school, the functioning of
the operation as a human assembly, is a teacher. The community and the physical environment are always teaching in a school. No one intends this teaching, or people usually do not think much about it until someone complains. Despite the inattention—or indeed because of the inattention—the influence can be profound. It can make the difference between the two main forms flowing easily and those forms facing impossible odds.

A school need not be one big happy family; it does need some minimum conditions of physical comfort, efficient organization and a nonhostile body of people. Both the teachers and the students deserve some respect for their personal dignity. The school ought to teach decency in being a school.\textsuperscript{15}

The metaphor of family should be used sparingly in reference to schools. The school should be a partial embodiment of community, that is, a communal expression that complements the family. Schools need not have father and mother figures, nor obedient children (including grown-ups who are treated like children). But when schools abandon the family posture they need not switch to a free market of competing individuals. Schools need to be disciplined communities of people that teach cooperation between students, as well as between students and school staff.\textsuperscript{16} Everyone in a school has a stake in seeing that school be a communal experience that keeps bureaucratic procedures at the service of learning. Nothing can guarantee or permanently secure such an atmosphere, but memos, bells, and loudspeakers do not substitute for face-to-face encounters.

The school's influence on behavior, especially on that of young children, is often called "socialization." A lot of not-so-useful discussion concerns whether the school should be in the socializing business. A good part of the argument could be eliminated by clearly distinguishing between school and classroom. If socializing means picking up the ways to act in society, then children, and many adults, acquire some of that in school. The fact that schools socialize the young is not really debatable. But that the intention of classroom instruction is to socialize is an altogether different proposition. The desired effect of the classroom might very well be to challenge society's ways not only outside the school but also inside the school.

Writers who understandably wish to protect the school's forms of learning often state the case poorly by fighting the school's part in socialization. Kieran Egan writes,

Socializing most effectively happens simply by living in societies day by day, and schools are generally rather ineffective socializing institutions, when they try to teach what is best learned from out-of-school experience. And further, by attempting to perform the socializing role at which they are ineffective, schools tend to undercut their educational role.\textsuperscript{17}

The last phrase in this quotation points up the confusion: the school's educational function includes socializing. It is not that schools should "try to teach what is best learned from out-of-school experience"; rather, they teach by being schools—they teach bad lessons or good lessons, but powerful lessons. What Egan is rightfully concerned about is the reduction of the classroom to a place for teaching social conformity. However, that concern is not properly stated by denying that the school has a legitimate educational role in socialization.

If we move now from the backdrop of community and environment to the kinds of teaching forms designed for schools, there is a single clear-cut division. On one side should be the classroom with its peculiar form of learning and on the other side should be the performance area with its less peculiar ways to learn. There should not be a chasm between the two; in fact, reaching some harmony and balance, if not complete integration, should be the heart of school reform.

I call these two school forms of teaching by place names: the classroom and the performance area. Without disparaging the individuals who are trying to teach, I am calling attention to the environment as teacher. The individual teacher is faced with manipulating the environment to bring about student response.

A distinction between the two physical environments does not necessarily mean their mutual exclusion. A room clearly designated as classroom might have computers along the wall for one kind of performance or a small theatrical stage for another kind of performance. Conversely, the sports complex or the dance studio might have sections for classroom instruction.

Before contrasting these two settings, we should note some continuity in the metaphors that can be used for teaching in school. Three of the most promising metaphors are apprenticeship, coaching, and instruction. In writing of job-related learning, I said apprenticeship is no longer comprehensive enough. But as a metaphor for teaching, it lights up connections between what a teacher does in a classroom and what a
One author who has brilliantly explored the metaphor of coaching in teaching is Donald Schön. Both *The Reflective Practitioner* and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* provide detailed examples of how expert teachers coach their students in art, industrial design, city planning, or psychotherapy. It is, therefore, surprising to read the comment of Patricia Graham: "As Schön has observed, professional practice, in this case college teaching is both learnable and coachable, but not teachable." An opposition between teaching and coaching is not at all the point of Schön's two books. On the contrary, he is trying to show how a good teacher teaches by using both apprenticeship and coaching methods.

Finally, there is the metaphor of "instruction." In modern educational literature, this term gets identified with the classroom. But as coaching and apprenticeship could move into the classroom, instruction could use some fresh air on stage or ballfield. What instruction connotes is precise, direct verbal commands. Instruction is a natural part of teaching any bodily skill. It can be thought of as a subordinate element within coaching or apprenticeship, but it is often the most crucial element. Every teacher of anything has to know how to give precise verbal commands that imply analytic understanding of a situation.

If instruction consists of precise verbal commands within bodily movement, how did it come to dominate classroom teaching and what should be its legitimate place? The answer is that the classroom instructor is indeed a choreographer. He or she is trying to do with written and spoken language what the dance instructor is doing with arms and legs. But if one loses all connection to bodily movement — for the classroom instructor that means losing a sense of the rhythms of speech and the ambiguities of words — then one is left with giving direct commands to the mind or the memory. In many contexts (for example, legal references to "religious instruction"), the term "instruction" is synonymous with indoctrination. Any metaphor for classroom teaching has to be grounded outside the classroom or else the classroom will be thought of as a place where big people tell little people what to think.

**Classroom Teaching**

What I have called classroom teaching can and does go on outside the walls of a classroom. However, in this section I wish to draw a portrait of what can and does happen inside the sacred space of classroom walls.
What are the conditions under which this strangest form of teaching-learning occurs?

First, the physical setting needs notice, both the bare physical facts and some of the aids that technology provides. Classrooms throughout the centuries have tended to be bare-walled boxes. The modern classroom arose as part of the modern concern for control embodied in prisons, asylums, and hospitals. Several specific reforms of the classroom are needed but its basic form should probably remain: a place that conveys a sense of quiet order, dedicated to ear more than eye. There should be fresh air and plenty of light, along with a minimum of distraction from outside the room. Nothing helps a classroom more than does carpeting. Janitors may not like carpets and children are prone to dirty them, but a carpet is often the difference between thoughtful conversation and someone straining to be heard amid reverberating sound. Many classrooms have the chairs nailed to the floor, all in proper rows facing forward. Fixed chairs for some discussions may be useful but the overwhelming choice has to be chairs that can move in all directions. Traditional classrooms have a chalkboard at the front; it is a human piece of technology not wholly replaceable by overheads, slides, video, computers, and the rest. But if there is still to be a chalkboard it should cover the whole front wall and some of the side walls. Chalkboards are for thinking with and working through long trains of speech.

Traditional classrooms, especially in the university, had a platform for the teacher. The idea was not all wrong, but the platform should be a small performance area either within or attached to the classroom. The platform is for students as much as teachers, or more exactly, the students when they act as teachers. Classrooms should not be cluttered with machinery. If a television monitor is helpful to a particular course, the equipment should be readily available and easy to use. If computers are needed, they should surround the main conversation area. Computers are now indispensable to the school’s work but they are not necessarily central to the classroom. The clear focus of the classroom ought to remain the spoken word. Classrooms are one of the few places in the world where people might listen carefully to what someone says and change their minds.

Before commenting on the languages of the classroom, I think it is necessary to defend the classroom against the charge that it is merely talk. People who should be sensitive to the issue often pick up a language that denigrates the classroom. To complain, for example, that the classroom is all talk and no action is to accept the modern split between talk and action. If, in contrast, one begins with the premise that action can be verbal or nonverbal, one is more likely to see how classroom action of the verbal kind can change the world. John Dewey and successive waves of reformers have begun with the principle of “learn by doing,” a principle never to be forgotten in teaching. But the peculiar action or doing in the classroom is speaking. Failing to grasp this point, reformers are always trying to shove things into a classroom that do not fit there. The pieces of equipment may belong in school (in the library, performance studios or computer center) but they can obscure the kinds of speech appropriate for the classroom.

John Dewey often sets up an unwise dichotomy that undercuts the serious conversation in a classroom, as when he writes in *Democracy and Education*:

> That education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active and constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory.... Its enactment into practice requires that the school environment be equipped with agencies for doing, with tools and physical materials, to an extent rarely attained.

Dewey’s unfortunate contrast here is between “telling” and “physical materials.” Any physical materials should be at the service of the forms of speech appropriate for the classroom. Dewey fails to name forms of language for the classroom other than “telling.” The alternative to telling is not physical equipment but the other teaching languages discussed in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Of the three families of languages I discussed, the third — teaching the conversation — holds a special place in the classroom. All human life can be imagined as conversation or dialogue. The classroom is a dialogue about dialogue, a reflecting upon the preconditions of conversation, the ambiguities of any genuine human speech, the possibilities of organizing large bodies of information. The classroom is no less than an entrance into the conversation of the human race. The professional schoolteacher’s job is to mediate between past writing and present situations. None of the languages of teaching is excluded on principle. Over a period of time, a classroom teacher will use almost every imag-
inable form of speech to spark interest, to probe for understanding, or
to clinch an argument.

Here is an appropriate place to reject the assumption that to teach in
a classroom is "to lecture." The assumption is perhaps behind Dewey's
contrast of "telling" and "using equipment." The rebellion against
lectures seldom leads to the naming of alternative languages for teach-
ing. The only term usually paired with "lecture" is "discussion," often
conceived to be the application of the lecture. The university is partic-
ularly lacking in imagination when it comes to naming the languages
of the classroom. I think that the first step in improving university
teaching would be a complete moratorium on the use of the term
"lecture."

This language of the university filters into secondary and even pri-
mary schools. Perhaps it is a (sad) fact that what many university
professors do is lecture. But elementary or secondary school teachers,
who survive and do a respectable job in the classroom, do not use lec-
turing as their way of teaching. They use a variety of forms of speech
which, if they had help in naming the languages, might help them to
understand better what they are already doing and open new possibili-
ties in their work. The alternative to "giving a lecture" is not arranging
the students in groups. The challenge for a classroom teacher is to
explore the resources of language.

In chapter 4, I defended the form called lecture against its many
detractors. But I also said that lecturing does not belong in a classroom,
or at least it should not have a prominence there. It should not be
any more common than its close relative, preaching. Every classroom
teacher gives occasional sermons; students do not mind so long as the
sermons are brief and to the point. Similarly, lecturing can sometimes
seem an efficient way to convey necessary information. Students do not
mind a little of that, too, in fact, they can easily become addicted to
the teacher being a substitute for the library. Student and teacher may
end up with a comfortable arrangement of information giving and note
taking that does not challenge either of them.

The old saying is more true than ever: any teacher who can be
replaced by a machine (or a book) should be. Machinery can be a
tremendous aid in enriching the environment with the information
that is the precondition, but not the aim of the classroom. When Chris
Whittle announced his ambition to revolutionize schools, he said, "It's
amazing to me that we don't bring the best lecturers electronically into

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schools." Television can be a helpful tool in a classroom but televised
lecturers are just what we do not need.

In chapter 4, in addition to lecturing and preaching, I discussed
storytelling. Ideally, students come to class with stories from home, sto-
ries out of books, the story of the school, the great stories of the human
race. Then the teacher can launch into dramatizing, analyzing, compar-
ing, playing with stories, all with the purpose of having stories better
shape our lives. In practice, much of classroom time may have to be
spent going over stories for the first time. That is not bad, of course; a
good story well told is nearly always welcome. The only danger is that
telling stories can edge out the third family of languages, which should
have center stage in the classroom.

The second family — the therapeutic languages — have to be kept
more at bay in the classroom. A school cannot function without them,
but a classroom has to be carefully distinguished from therapy treat-
ment. Sometimes people should not be in a classroom because they
first need to get past some obstacles to learning. There are, however,
therapeutic languages that are always appropriate in the classroom: the
rituals of politeness, kindness, and respect. If a sense of self-respect
and graciousness is not evident, then the hard work of thinking about
academic matters is stymied.

The classroom's main languages are those of the third family. This
family includes dramatic performance, dialectical discussions, and aca-
demic criticism. Each of these can be a way of shaking up usual patterns
of speech that confine our minds. Dramatic performance connotes play-
ing with language and the taking of parts. The drama may be one that
tells a story, but instead of the story simply being a vehicle for the de-
leverance of truth, dramatic performance interjects a distance between
speaker and story. A lot of writing in recent years has dealt with "role
playing." As a technique for getting a group of students to reflect on
the words they use, such reversals are quite effective. In a class that is
dealing with sexual practice, an adolescent playing the role of a parent
can change the outlook of a whole group.

What is less often spoken about is that the person at the front of
the room called "the teacher" is playing a role all the time. Outside this
room he or she has a life distinct from classroom instructor. The person
who has spent years preparing to teach in a classroom (and is usually
paid to do so) has to approach the work with the zest of a stage actor.

The fifty or ninety minutes of this class is sacred time, not just time for
an ordinary conversation, but for challenging everyone in the room to reflect on their words.  

The classroom instructor's lines are not all set beforehand, although a lesson plan is usually helpful. A class meeting that has been carefully planned allows for the greatest feeling of spontaneity and the possibility of redoing the show in the middle of the play. Some contemporary plays that ask “what is a play?” and “who are the players?” get close to the classroom. If a play in a theater tries to break out from behind the prosenium, an audience unprepared for the experience may be left confused and angry. People entering a classroom should be prepared for exploring what eventually arises in every area of study: Who or what teaches? Who or what appointed the teacher? Who or what decided that history or literature or psychology exist as the subject matter? In the end, the people who entered the class as “students” have to demonstrate, preferably both in writing and in oral presentation, that they could play “teacher.” That is really what testing and evaluation are.

The second language in the family of teaching the conversation is “dialectical discussion.” The somewhat technical adjective is to highlight that the classroom is different from a local bar or the office coffee machine. The sacred time in the classroom is not for endless bull sessions. Discussion of ideas and their assumptions is what has to be structured in classrooms. The careful choice of the topic for discussion, the proper number of people in each group, and the planning of the physical arrangement of the chairs all lead to the most spontaneity and ease in the discussion.

The use of group discussion is highly praised in educational literature. Adult-education writing often assumes that it is practically the only way for adults to learn. However, much of the praise of discussion groups is simply a vote against “lecturing.” That is a bad avenue of approach to using group discussion. Some teachers conclude that if they cannot push it into the students (by lecture) then they will pull it out (by discussion groups). This conclusion is often accompanied by a reference to education meaning “to lead out.”

Dialectical discussion can better be imagined as leading people in, that is, setting them into the middle of the human race’s conversation. Ideas are neither put in nor pulled out; they happen in between the speakers. For each of us as learners, the conversation is at first between great minds who have spent years mastering a “discipline” of ideas. We may have to spend a long time listening carefully to the discussion.

Then our three- or four-person group can be a modest embodiment of that human conversation.

Similar to role playing as dramatic performance, discussion is usually spoken of as a technique that the teacher can use. But the teacher, too, is constantly functioning in a group. Within a school, the group ought to include the faculty’s interaction. The faculty ought to stimulate the thinking of individual teachers and protect students if a teacher is irresponsible. The school faculty is a representation of the community of scholars that span the human race. The classroom teacher ought never to lose sight of being in a group of searchers or researchers of the truth. The individual teacher can manifest this relation by a classroom reading of a passage from a book or an essay. This is where a lecture — say, about thirty seconds in length — has a place in the classroom. The teacher can then respectfully agree and disagree with the writer’s formulation of the truth. “Dialectical” means going back and forth with the end (purpose) of getting closer to the truth, but without end (termination).  

Finally, we come to the language most specifically designed for the classroom: academic criticism. In the previous two languages, the meaning of the words is implicitly in question. Here the meaning of words is the question. The grammatical form that academic criticism takes is the interrogative. Who says so? Why? What is presumed? What implications follow? Of course, in the actual practice of teaching one varies the grammar and syntax. For example, ironic statements can lighten the tone, while forcing the questioning of an apparent statement of fact.

We easily identify questions with the students. The teacher finishes speaking and says, “Are there any questions?” The better teacher tries to start with the student’s questions. But asking for questions at the beginning of a class or at the start of a course may be no more effective than asking at the end of the class or the course. The more crucial thing is the teacher’s manner of using questions in teaching. If the teacher is asking serious questions, that process will unfreeze the students’ questions.

By becoming a questioner the student becomes a teacher. In Augustine’s essay “The Teacher” (written in the form of questioning), his interlocutor asks, “How in the world do you suppose we learn, if not by asking questions?” Augustine responds, “I think that even then we simply want to teach. Now I am inquiring of you whether you ask a question for any other reason than to teach the person asked what it
is you want to know.” At the most primordial level of teaching, bodily examples reveal the continuity of teaching and learning, and at the most esoteric level of ultimate questions, the form of questioning reveals that teaching and learning are elements of the same process.

The central element in the classroom is not the idea or the concept but the word. To walk across the threshold of a classroom, whether in second grade or in a doctoral program, is to expose one’s words to public scrutiny. The student’s thoughts remain private, largely hidden from the teacher and perhaps from the student as well. But words are in between student and teacher with a social and public existence. The teacher’s words as well as the student’s words are open to questioning. The first question is not, Do you agree? but, What do you mean? or, even more important, What do the words mean? The difference between the intended meaning of the speaker and the lexical meaning of a statement is precisely the space of academic criticism.

The teacher is the one who is supposed to bring the discipline of academic learning to bear on the inevitable disputes about the meaning of the words. The teacher’s criticism is not directed at a person but at words. The teacher unendingly asks, “Is there a better way to say what you are trying to say?” As always, the person who deserves the name “teacher” has to show how to do it better. In teaching academically, a teacher has to use a strange style of bending the words back on themselves so that the student begins to hear his or her own words and to recognize their ambiguity.

Where we have descriptions of great thinkers in classrooms, the initial reaction of a student is commonly one of confusion or anger. The description of Wittgenstein’s teaching is probably similar to what one would find with any good classroom instructor: “He taught classes not by lecturing, nor yet by what we usually think of as discussion. Wittgenstein thought aloud before his class.” The student becomes a participant in this speaking which is thinking aloud. The student’s own words are brought into the thinking aloud with the human race. “Midwife teachers help students deliver their words to the world, and they use their own knowledge to put the students into conversation with other voices—past and present in the culture.”

Teaching in a classroom never consists of “covering a subject.” Books and computers are available for that purpose. What a student should come to a classroom for is to get insight into what has already been read. The amount of the reading is no measure of the insight. Jerome

Bruner describes a course he took with I. A. Richards that began with the teacher writing on the board: “Gray is all theory / Green grows the golden tree of life.” Bruner comments, “The reading time for eleven words was three weeks. It was the antithesis of just reading, and the reward in the end was that I owned outright, free and clear, eleven words. A good bargain. Never before had I read with such a lively sense of conjecture, like a speaker and not a listener, or like a writer and not a reader.”

The direct object of “to teach” in the classroom setting is usually “a subject.” There is a running debate over whether that is the right noun and whether the idea of a school subject is not a false construct. This is a legitimate arena for academic criticism. A first question for biology class is “Who says there is such a thing as biology?” The answer will have to include the admission that “biology” is a somewhat arbitrary invention of someone who thought that speaking of a contrast between living things and nonliving things is a helpful way to proceed.

Inevitably, the classroom curriculum has to be broken down into areas of study. Inventing a lot of new names for these areas may seem attractive but it seldom works. The academic world is constantly, though slowly, reshaping these names. Biology can be broken down into smaller areas of study, and biology overlaps other sciences with different approaches. There continue to be people called biologists, chemists, and physicists. That fact does not necessarily mean that high school students should study biology, chemistry, and physics in three different years. A way to get at better questions might be to have biology, chemistry, and physics teachers cooperate in a single curriculum area. The teachers could devise any plan that would stimulate students’ thinking about these and other sciences.

P. H. Hirst has proposed that to teach a subject is to deal with a “logical grammar.” That is, each school subject to be a subject has to have a particular structure of ideas that can be presented by the teacher. Hirst draws his examples from history, physics, and mathematics. John Passmore has criticized this way of thinking because it seems inapplicable to much of the school timetable; he cites the examples of typing and cooking as school topics that do not have a distinctive logic. He also thinks that to “teach English” is not done by teaching a logical grammar, and that “history” does not have its own logical grammar. That leaves only physics and mathematics for Hirst’s explanation of teaching subjects in school.
Passmore raises several interesting questions here. They force one to think in narrower terms (not necessarily a bad thing) of what teaching a subject in a classroom means. Can one teach something in a classroom that is not a "subject"? I think that what we need is to complement the teaching of subjects with another kind of teaching, one that goes on inside the school as well as outside. Topics such as typing or cooking do not belong in the classroom, though they may belong in the performance area described below. Similarly, French or English is not the name of a school subject, but French grammar or British literature can be.

As for history not having its own "logical grammar," I think Passmore is correct. But what this example reveals is that the whole discussion should be about ways of speaking rather than logical structures. A classroom subject is indeed an arbitrary division, but if it is a way of speaking with a long history (and "history," as an example, does have such history), then it may be a serviceable if slightly illogical category. And a new subject can push its way into the curriculum if enough people are convinced that it is an important area around which intelligent discussion is possible. The walls of the classroom curriculum are always being pushed through, moved around, torn down, and rebuilt. That is the excitement and the frustration for anyone whose work is the teaching of subjects in a classroom.

Performance Areas

The previous discussion focused on a single area, the classroom. The classroom is not an essentially different place for girls or boys, 6-year-olds or 60-year-olds, Africans or South Americans. The activity taking place within this space can be described with some precision. However, the second main form of school learning is necessarily in the plural: performance areas. The complexity of performance casts us into bewildering complexity.

One of the many ambiguities surrounding the word school is whether it refers to an agency under which a set of activities can be organized or whether it means a separate and quite restricted institution of learning. Especially for younger people, the efficient way to reach them often seems to be under the auspices of the school. Important health and government services are made available in school. For example, many children receive their best meal of the day in the school cafeteria. If a child needs medical first aid or counseling for emotional distress, the school is likely to be a source of help.

As long as costs are contained, few people complain about these additions to the school. However, the process does create a mentality that the school is an agent for all kinds of social assistance. The result is a constant expansion of topics in the curriculum and additional courses in teacher preparation. If there are 40,000 automobile deaths, introduce driver education. If the real estate industry supports racial segregation, integrate society by busing children to school. If AIDS is rampant, distribute condoms in school.

The last example, condoms, has crystallized the problem more than did dozens of other worthwhile concerns that have been installed in schools. The area of AIDS education raises a question about the nature of education and the limits of the school. The importance of the politically volatile issue of condoms is that it forces people to ask theoretically and practically, What is a school? If the relevance to education of AIDS is only discussed under the rubric of the distribution of condoms, many people object that the school is simply aping the vending machines in a typical men's room.

What this issue could spark is a discussion of how the classroom's verbal instruction can be appropriately complemented by another kind of learning, one that I have placed in the performance areas. In the case of AIDS, the performance might include counseling, artistic exhibitions and the availability of materials for the protection of health (all of these approaches carried out with careful attention to the age of students). Nonetheless, because the school is always on the verge of being overwhelmed by society's concerns, it would be desirable to supply many worthwhile services and educational experiences by a means other than the school.

Although there are many services and concerns that are of questionable validity for school to offer, there are performance areas that have rightfully been acknowledged for many decades as part of school. The three main areas are (1) art, (2) job-related work, and (3) sports. For young people, all of these areas should be part of their school education. For older people, a balance of the three need not always be in a school, but the school should not be thought to exclude one or all of these elements.

The arts, as we use the term, are central to anyone's lifelong education. Aesthetic education begins before age 5 and can continue until
death. One can learn an art from an individual teacher outside school, but it makes sense to have the school provide organized teaching of various arts. Any school for young people should have designated spaces for laboratory, studio, or audition hall. How much variety a particular school can offer depends upon local conditions, including financial considerations and the availability of teachers. But every school pupil ought to be able to get a taste of some artistic experience.

Many verbal arts have an obvious connection to the classroom and the assessment of classroom learning. I mentioned earlier that dramatic performance is intrinsic to classroom teaching. A natural overflow is into class or school plays. Similarly, a debating team or newspaper staff carries over verbal learning into verbal art. Sometimes the artistic projects are restricted to a small group who engage in extracurriculars. However, learning through group projects should be a regular part of the school (if not the classroom) curriculum. Not everyone is a talented artist; nonetheless, every young person should be able to stand in front of an audience to articulate what he or she knows and to develop a well-shaped argument.

In the previous section, I noted that English or French is not a classroom subject. Learning to speak a language is an art that is not effectively taught in a classroom. For both one's first and second language, the classroom's effective use is after you have learned to speak. The school can supply aids, such as an audiotape library and recorders. Most effectively, the school can be the organizer of travel to a country where the language is spoken. This foreign country may be a few city blocks away.

Other arts, less verbal in character, should have a place in the school distinct from the classroom. When we are not sure whether something belongs in the classroom, we often insist on its place by attaching the word education (driver education, physical education, drug education). This peculiar twist of language usually has the opposite effect of certifying that the course is not a serious part of education. Sometimes we attach appreciation to various things that do not fit in the classroom but we think are a part of everyone's education. Thus, we have courses in art appreciation or music appreciation, but such appreciations have often turned students against appreciating anything but the most banal art.

We need serious courses in the classroom that examine the history and nature of art. In addition, if there is to be a growing appreciation of painting, music, sculpture, architecture, pottery, gardening, or woodworking, we need some participation, however amateurish, in the doing of these arts. With some of the arts, one learns solitude and the value of self-discipline. With other arts, one learns the value of teamwork. A band or chorus for children in a school is an invaluable experience of being taught by community, environment, objects, master teacher and fellow apprentices.

The second general area that most schools have some responsibility for is job performance. The classroom instruction for young people needs complementing with the performance of skills that are helpful to holding a job now or in the future. The majority of students in college and even in high school have part-time jobs so that the school's task is not mainly to initiate work programs but to reach a better relation between existing forms of learning.

The high school or college also has to work in cooperation with business institutions, even while being careful to maintain its own autonomy. The business world can sometimes help financially (for example, with computer material); sometimes it can supply specialized teaching. The school has to ask what realistic experiences of the job world are possible within the school's walls. Where a realistic experience of jobs is not possible, then the school must look beyond itself. The school's performance areas may include a factory downtown or a health center in the neighborhood.

Some schools are predominantly this kind of learning. That makes sense for people training to be better at their job or retraining if they are unemployed. A trade school is a place that unashamedly announces what its function is. Many such schools produce what they promise: training for existing jobs. Unfortunately, the jobs are often ones of limited skill for the bottom of the economy. If people are to advance in personal satisfaction and social rewards through work, job performance usually has to be coupled with serious classroom work. This fact is related to the disastrous split in schools for young people.

Since early in this century, there have been academic schools for those headed for the better jobs and vocational schools for those considered not academically talented. What should be two parts of one school became two schools. The two segregated populations were both the poorer for this segregation. Not surprisingly, the students in the vocational schools were financially poorer. Their training was often on outdated equipment and they were prepared for jobs that were either
not in the economy or could quickly disappear. The term "vocational," chosen for its religious connotations, was a galling feature of this split that provided power for the rich and a vocation for the poor.

Despite all the limitations of the trade and vocational system, these schools and their dedicated teachers provide important lessons on teaching. The teacher in the classroom, dealing with literature, science, and history, has to ask, In what way is this real work? In what way do I show these students how to perform, not necessarily how to get rich from a job but how to have satisfaction in work? What does hands-on learning mean in a classroom?

The schools that have taught manual trades are still a helpful reminder. However different the future may be, it will still need people who can make things, fix things that are broken, and take care of complicated services to large populations. If the two-tiered school system is gradually integrated, the academic students might get a more realistic taste of the job experience. Learning to use sophisticated machinery to retrieve information should be a part of everyone's education.40

I think it should be clear today that an emphasis upon job preparation need not be gender-biased. What Plato envisioned for his upper class is now required for the whole society: equal pay for equal work, and, more important, equal access to all jobs. If the most desirable jobs are to be shared between men and women, then there has to be a more equitable sharing of housework and child care. Plato casually dismisses womanish work in his ideal education for the ideal state.41 But appreciation of all work and an equitable sharing of the most laborious jobs are necessary for justice between men and women.

In the previous chapter, I called attention to a particular kind of work — service to those in need — as part of education. The performance area here is generally outside the school, but could be organized by the school. The Carnegie report, High School, called for a service requirement in each of the four years of high school. The report suggested that an academic credit be given for such work.42 Perhaps that is the only way to get educational attention, but it muddies the distinction between classroom curriculum and school curriculum. The New York Times Magazine published an article on this movement entitled "Soup Kitchen Classroom."43 That title does not really help either soup kitchens or classrooms, which are complementary forms of education. The classroom needs protection of its fragile boundaries; and the kitchen is not a place to study lessons but to serve soup.
organized sports. Since the passing of Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972, there has been remarkable progress in correcting the terrible bias against girls and women in scholastic sports programs. A long way remains but a fairer, if not equal, attention to women in sports is one of the great educational successes of recent times.

I think there is an interesting parallel here between gender bias in the classroom and in the sports arena. I said that emphasis on language in the classroom is not gender-biased. To have voice in the classroom is at least as important to women as to men. True, the women have been mostly silent and often overlooked in classroom practice. But in every classroom subject women can hold their own, even if the evidence may never be conclusive whether girls are generally better at some subjects, boys at others.

Performance in the sports arena is a similar case. Women have not been present anywhere near as much as men. A call to recognize the importance of sports in teaching may seem biased against women. But the physical education of the human body is at least as important to women as to men. Women may never match men in some highly valued sport's roles (for example, linebacker), but in other sports with criteria of grace and elegance women may be generally superior. In any case, what Plato once again wished for his upper-class guardians — equality of opportunity in sports — may finally be coming about for young people in the near future.

Chapter 9

Teaching Morally, Teaching Morality

This last chapter returns to the theme of the first chapter: the moral dilemma inherent to teaching. The intervening chapters have laid out the elements for a solution to that dilemma. If one is attentive to the several forms of teaching and the language appropriate to each form, it is possible to teach morally. Only after that is it possible to move on to teaching morality. If teaching were itself an immoral activity, it would be absurd to ask how to teach morality. In this chapter, I summarize the case for teaching morally. I then turn to the teaching of morality in the various forms of education. And for the most challenging test of teaching morality, I offer a final section on classroom instruction in morality.

Before proceeding to the necessary distinctions for teaching morally, teaching morality, and teaching morality in the classroom, I look first at the twentieth century's attempt to deal with morality under the rubric of "moral education." For much of this century, "moral education" has meant a set of techniques that would supposedly facilitate the moral development of children. During the past decade a vigorous reaction has set in, critical of the vacuousness of moral education. This new "moral education" is concerned with character, virtue, and good behavior.1

It would be difficult not to feel some sympathy for this recent movement. Who is not in favor of good character and well-behaved children? For more than a decade, Gallup polls have shown 80–90 percent of parents in favor of a moral education that would develop character and encourage the practice of virtues. Schoolteachers, it should be noted, are nowhere near so enthusiastic. Are they just shirking their duty? Or could it be that while the parents are right in thinking that morality is about good character and virtuous behavior, schoolteachers are also right in sensing the limits of the classroom for such education?

The key to progress here is an understanding of the forms and languages of teaching. In the current cries for reform there is very