

I am mostly silent in our faculty meetings. I was so in the last meeting too. But I feel I have not the right to bury my reaction to what happened in this last meeting definitely in my mind. It would look as if I did not want to participate in the solution of problems that are very vital for the forming of a spiritual community. It was hard for me to speak to the debate going on in the last meeting because I estimate very highly both sides and the persons involved in it, but do not agree fully with either of them. Just this fact, that I do not subscribe to either one attitude or the other absolutely and therefore would not like to have one or the other seen as a kind of community-dogma; this fact gives me the right once more to speak to the last week's discussion - if that was a discussion at all - hoping that I can contribute something-- not to reconcile contrasting opinions - but to find a form of living together without this useless and hopeless rivalry about the rank of fields and the persons representing them.

I feel also, that I have the right to speak because I can perhaps best understand both sides; for music seems to me related to both fields and can't exist without a perfect balance of the intellectual and the emotional.

So I may be better able than anybody else to restore this equal temperature that seems to be necessary to make music out of the diversity of tones, that means in our community the diversity of individualities, tuning them in a way that just the most unrelated individualities as, let us say, g sharp and a flat can be identified. And only because this balance has been disturbed in a very irritating way may I perhaps today put more weight on one of the two scales. Not because I want to belong to one of the two parties.

I won't argue about the conclusions made from the statistics, which were put on the blackboard in the last meeting. Everybody knows and I think the philosopher best of all, that you can interpret statistics how you want to interpret them; at any rate, with the best will, I could not understand how those figures should prove that just the art department was responsible for the decline in the number of students in the last three years. Because there has been no change in the art department for 3 years while there have been many changes in the other fields.

As I said - I won't talk about these conclusions, nor do I want to draw some of my own; all that seems to me too arbitrary to base on it any accusation against one or the other side. I won't accuse, I won't excuse. I want only to balance the scales. Therefore I want to pick out at random one of the reproaches that were laid on one of the scales, the scale of the art department. This reproach was that it is too esoteric. I won't discuss the question of whether this reproach was right or not. I shall only see if I can counter-balance this weight by an equal weight on the other scale; let us call it the scale of the philosophical department.

When I thought it over, how I could keep the scales in balance, I suddenly remembered an episode from last year.

There happened to be here a guest speaker from the Society for Ethical Culture. He talked about the work of this Society, a very practical work of charity and education based on the idea of tolerance. In the discussion after this talk he was vehemently antagonized by our philosophical department - and it was said to him that we are against tolerance because we are looking for the absolute. I was very impressed by that because it seemed to me very contradictory.

As I think that we may achieve by intolerance absolute power, but not the absolute, that we won't find by intolerance the absolute truth, but always only ourselves in the whole world. What I intended to say - mentioning this episode - is only this: I don't think that this speaker from the Society for Ethical Culture, or anybody who may have heard about that, would have gotten the impression that our college represents a school that is very concerned about making students fit for work in practical life, I think rather he may have thought, too, we are very esoteric.

I don't think either - let us say - that the idea that we should live in a more metaphysical way is that which the average well-to-do businessman expects as a program of a college that could give his son the right background for a good career after school.

Don't misunderstand me! I think just this idea, that what we are doing should have a metaphysical sense too, is absolutely right.

I think only: If we have ideas like that and propagates them we should not always get upset when the bill is presented in the enrollment, and say it is because others are esoteric. No - I think we should all stick to our way of thinking and face bravely the fact that we are a collection of people who have partly opinions which are not accredited in general. More than that: this school would have no sense if it would not be that way.

I think only then shall we be somehow on a line with the real great educators, who were educators just because they wanted to change the world.

I think that nobody can be considered to be a stronger incarnation of an educative mind than Socrates, because he literally was convinced that virtue can be taught, that you only have to know what is good to be good. And what wonderful irony of fate: he was sentenced to death because he spoiled the youth of Athens.

Don't misunderstand me! I think it is absolutely necessary that we don't lose contact with life and that students who studied at M M C are prepared to stand the hard tests of life, see clear their way into it and have also the possibility to continue their studies at other schools. But we should not try to buy higher enrollments by self-deception and by denying what we are, who we are and what we stand for; and I think we will reach more just in being different than in trying to force upon our individual faces any masquerade that may please everybody.

But of course what we really need is some kind of common platform, on which we ALL can stand, feeling free in our opinions, in the way we are working - and at the same time feeling that something binds us together.

We are often told that a community must have a common idea, but what was offered to us from all sides were more ideologies than ideas. And that is a great difference. While it is essential for ideas that they are all-comprising, ideologies are always strictly excluding, asserting themselves by discrediting any different opinion and putting anathemas on others. And that is what seems to me not right in all the pronouncements of the different parts, that the negative pronouncements are so penetrating and inexorable, that either the old books are burnt or the new art, either philosophy or science, either art or philosophy, the intellectual or the emotional. I always have the impression of auto-da-fes going on. And I think auto-da-fes are only necessary when you are afraid of something. But if you are strong enough in what you are doing or thinking, if you are convinced and can convince others, you have not to condemn and to burn. This war of anathemas creates an unbearable atmosphere in which you can not live when you don't submit yourself to one of the creeds. That way never a community will arise but only bad provincialism. That means that clubs and cliques are formed, breaking up definitely all common spirit that is based on a free exchange of thoughts and first of all on giving up this ridiculous fight about the rank of the different disciplines which are offered by the College. Only if we give equal evaluation to all fields and take all of them extremely serious, only then we may reach a new kind of universality as educational background that is opposed to the narrow-minded, specialistic training that is a character of average education today. But this genuine universality can only be reached if everybody sees the whole world in his field and the others concede this right to him, not in the interfering of anybody with the field of anybody else. And I must say when I came here I understood this genuine universality as a basic principle of the school and was very happy to find a place where it would be possible - to speak about my own field - to see music not as a distracting, light entertainment for the tired hours after the serious hours of business, but as something that is a very hard discipline that asks for our utmost concentration and offers an interpretation of the world and life equal to any other.

Only to balance the scales I may be allowed to draw some light for this question of the rank of the different fields from a very interesting phenomenon that is partly linguistic, partly historic, partly philosophic, partly theologic. I hope I shall be excused by the experts when I venture to talk about fields in which I am not competent at all. But I shall restrict myself to what I am told are facts which may speak for themselves. I intend to remind you of the history of the notion "word", and, in connection with that, of the changing evaluation that was given to what language means. I don't mean the English term "word", nor any other corresponding term in a modern language. It is the Greek noun into which our noun "word" is translated in general: the Greek logos, that I intend to speak of.

In the Greek philosophy, before Socrates, this term logos did not mean "word", it meant reason as the immanent fundament of the world. The meaning of this term logos underwent changes and it became very important in the late Hellenistic philosophy, which tried to reconcile ideas of the Bible with Greek philosophy. The definite change of the meaning of the logos is shown in a very significant way in the gospel of St John. It starts with the sentence: "In archa ho logos" which is translated: "In the beginning was the word". And the logos is not interpreted as the last fundament of the world; the logos is the word of God that became flesh, it is identified with Christ as the mediator of God.

This idea that the logos does not represent absolute truth itself, but is only a mediator of the Divine shows a very different evaluation of the logos. May we translate it with reason or with word as the Bible does. I can't help, in connection with that, reminding you of the beautiful commentary that Goethe gave to this first sentence of the Gospel of St John. Faust opens the Bible and says

"Geschrieben steht: im Anfang war das Wort.
Hier stock ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort?
Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen,
Ich muss es anders übersetzen,
Wenn ich vom Geiste recht erleuchtet bin".

"Es writ: in the beginning was the word!
I pause, perplexed! Who now will help afford?
I can not the mere word so highly prize;
I must translate it otherwise,
If by the spirit guided as I read!"

I think that this sentence of Goethe, "I can not the mere word so highly prize". - this sentence of a great poet, whose means of expression were words, can be a warning for us. It does not only mean that other means of expression can be as valuable as words and can build up a full world of their own at least as closely related to the Divine - or however you want to call the absolute - at least as nearly related to it as words. I think this sentence of the word - and world-builder, Goethe - not to overestimate words, should also be a warning in another direction:

We should not use words like Primitives, using them as magic tools, making cults with words, either in the positive or the negative sense. There are some words which mean, in our community, either taboo or fetish just according to the person that uses them. I think we should not regress to this low level of cults. This tyranny of words is the best tool to destroy a community, to develop personal sensitivities, blind discrediting of the opinion of others barren fights about empty terms. It makes it impossible to develop that genuine universality that we can reach only if we don't indulge too much in general pronouncements, but rather try to give general meaning to all that we do in our special fields without interfering with the others and without discrediting other fields and other viewpoints but our own.