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# On Being a Schoolmaster

(for Donald Wright, who gave me my chance)

Willie Jones

## Abstract

During the 16th Century, the English language grew at an astonishing rate. It is not surprising, therefore, that the age was also notable for a special interest in schooling, and that many works on the subject were published: growth and interest will have fed each other and led each other on. After an anecdotal introduction and review of the writer's own pedagogic principles, the essay glances at two Italian works of instruction, one of them a set of paintings that feature images of good and bad government, the other the most famous courtesy book of its age. The essay's main purpose, however, is to look at three works of 16th Century pedagogy written in English, with the intention of celebrating them as texts which still have much to teach those of us who live in a dehumanized age devoted to the making of money and to the lowering of standards, linguistic no less than ethical: and which of those goes before the other might also be hard to say.

Key words: Freedom, Discipline, Love

## Introduction

At the beginning of the year the editor of a magazine issued monthly by the Sorachi Institute of Education asked me for some comments on the Japanese educational system: what were its faults, and how might they be corrected? I wrote the somewhat impressionistic

pages which form the first part of this piece: they were translated and published in May<sup>1</sup>. Since I had been planning to write about one or two sixteenth century educational treatises, I thought that my remarks (here revised and expanded) might act as an anecdotal prelude (a pragmatic starting point) to earlier, more theoretical investigations which I had carried out nearly thirty years ago while on a Schoolmaster Studentship at Merton College, Oxford; they were part of a wider project — to study the classical and neo-platonic images of the dance as a symbol of divine, cosmic and social order — but since they also touched on some of my own beliefs about what it means to be a good schoolmaster, I have always wanted to write about them, as the historical background to whatever a present-day pedagogue might wish to say about his profession, and what it is that he thinks he ought to be doing.

### **I: To Each His Own**

A boy danced by himself, alone on the sand. His movements were spontaneous, carefree, yet their unschooled sportiveness seemed, at the same time, unheeding, care<sup>less</sup>, as if he might also have been unconsciously daring danger. I thought at once of Robert Macleod, whom I had known in England more than twenty years earlier. When I first saw Robert he would have been thirteen, his head a cap of copper curls, two or so years younger than the black-haired boy dancing at the edge of the Japan Sea as if he were holding himself up as a mirror to the yearning, rebounding waves.

I first noticed Robert on *The Shelton*, a run for junior boys which makes its cow-pastured way upstream beside the River Severn, until — at a point where a brief cliff, unkempt hedges and a path come together — we would emerge on to the Oswestry road: here, we used

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to have an ‘all-up’, a pause, when the less energetic or less athletic could rejoin the pace setters. Although still only a new boy, Robert stood out not just because of his extraordinary hair but for the high-spirited fashion in which he exchanged scholarly badinage with his form master, my colleague Mark Mortimer, who was also my running mate.

When, later in the same term, I met Robert next, we were in E4 — our playroom, as another bright (and naughty) boy once called it — where I was supposed to be introducing his form of young scholars to the joys of drama. As he threw himself about the small stage without regard for the obstacles in his way, I thought “that boy is going to kill himself!” Eight years later he did, arranging his room to look like the one in which a youthful poet took his own life, as Henry Wallis pictured the act in the well-known painting which hangs now in the Tate: *The Death of Chatterton*: Wordsworth’s “marvellous boy, The sleepless soul that perished in his pride”<sup>2</sup>.

The first time he attempted to kill himself, Robert had bedded down beside the rapidly rising Severn on a December night of freezing rain, close to the spot where I had first noticed him four years earlier, a spot which he had perhaps even then marked out as a possible resting place; but he was found by his friend John Young before hypothermia had finished off the work begun by a bottle of vodka. “I failed,” he said to me ruefully in the Ridgemount kitchen, after John had carried him the mile and a half home. “No, I don’t think you failed,” I said: “obviously, your will to live is stronger than your will to die.” I was wrong.

Several nights before this, in my sitting room with two of his friends, Robert had talked of suicide and we, his friends and I, had argued that this wasn’t the best way of solving one’s problems; but that wasn’t his problem: he was eager, so he told us, to know what it would

be like to die, to see what he might find on the other side. Jeremy and Michael (his fellow tutees) agreed with me (their tutor) that we should all discover that soon enough without taking steps to hurry the moment on. An hour after he had left to go back to his house, his Housemaster rang: where was Robert? I learned the following day that he had sat by the river for a long time, a few distant lights palely reflected in the dark, full-bodied flood.

When, a couple of days later, he did not turn up for a five o'clock class, his friend John Young guessed where Robert might have taken himself off to: a sandy shelf of river bank near the Shelton road junction, where John tracked him down, and fireman-lifted him home in the black rain.

After that, and for others' sake as well as his own, it was thought best that he should go home to London to finish preparing for his A levels with a private tutor. As soon as he had left, his Sixth Form English Set perked up at once: although not really surprised, I was struck by just how much most of his form-mates had held their tongues out of fear of his. When, the following summer, he was due to stay with me in my flat and take his exams, his mother rang one sunny afternoon to say that he would not, after all, be coming: he had tried to kill himself again. I said something feeble like "Oh dear, I'm so sorry. The poor chap!" His mother was made of sterner stuff: "The little bastard!", she replied.

His form-mates might have agreed, for when Robert, always punctual, was, on that dark damp night, not sitting in his place across the hollow square from me, they showed little sympathy when I began to be anxious. I started the lesson, but after a minute or two I turned to John, who always sat at right angles to me, on my right. "Where's Robert?", I asked. John pulled a piece of paper from his pocket and,

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without a word, handed it to me: it was Robert's Last Will and Testament. "Do you know where he might be?" "I think so." "And you were just going to sit there and not tell me? You'd better go off and find him, while I go and see your Housemaster. Will the rest of you please read." Not one of us thought that Robert might have been pulling our legs (that was not his style), but Bill Walden-Jones offered an opinion which many of the class may have shared: "Why not let him commit suicide, if that's what he wants to do. You haven't any right to stop him." "I may not have the right," I replied, "but I think that I have a duty to try."

During the previous summer, just before a lesson was due to begin, Robert slid across his desk top and marched over to me. "Read that," he said, thrusting a letter at me. I glanced at the signature: "It's a letter from your father. I don't think that I should." "I want you to read it." It was a letter of advice. "Well?" "I think that your father is quite right." Robert snorted, took the letter and returned to his seat, and we went back to playing the verbal table tennis which I actually enjoyed as much as he did, but which most of his form-mates had not by then acquired the experience to handle.

Robert's father was a sea-captain, and, so Robert told me, a pirate; his mother, clearly no respecter of convention either, lived with a Spaniard, and when — beneath the flowering limes at what was to be his last Speech Day — he introduced me to them with the words "This is my mother. And this is her lover", he was obviously attempting to take their adultery in his stride, but his insouciance was, I didn't doubt, a performance, to mask whatever pain he felt at his mother's infidelity. Another Housemaster told of a conversation with a not dissimilar nonchalant flick to its well-barbed tail: at the beginning of a term he said to one of his boys (the bearer of a familiar Salopian name), "I see

that you've changed houses." "Yes", said the boy dryly, "we've changed husbands, too!" A broken marriage, indeed, often lay behind the behaviour of awkward boys, and such boys often came my way.

Since I had already been told that most of his teachers hated the boy dancing with the waves (because he was naughty boy), I asked if he might have come from a broken home, and I was told by the teacher in charge of the party (the friend who had invited me to join them) that he did: his father had deserted the family and his mother had given up trying to control him. So, on a tiny strip of beach beside the Japan Sea, I naturally thought of Robert Macleod: I was watching another boy's "glad animal movements", which hinted, or so it looked to me, at more than an exuberant zest for life: there was, in their heedless abandonment, a craving for extinction, perhaps. I had noticed the boy on the bus: it was difficult not to — for while most public faces in Japan are merely masks, his had been marvellously mischievous (as, indeed, Robert's had often been).

Yet naughty boys, who may therefore be notorious boys (not my joke), are precious, and should be treasured, although in that respect they are no different from any other child: for their naughtiness (if it is not actually malevolent) is as likely as not to come from an overabundance of energy that has not yet found its proper release in any form of work which will satisfy its possessor. It is the teacher's job to seek out a child's talent, and find the means to tap its energy positively, creatively. Here was a boy who ought to have been following in the steps of Tetsuya Kumakawa, let us say, but no one was prepared to guide him. I was naturally troubled, and thought: if he is unable to find love at home, if there is no love for him at school, if there is no desire on anyone's part to help him to discover and develop his talents, so that he would then be encouraged to follow the path which his gifts might

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then lead him to pursue, what will become of him?

Traditional Japanese pedagogy, though, seems not to think in these terms: yet until it does, there will be no end to the bullying, more children will use knives (or even guns) against other children, and people will wonder what to do about it. More disinterested affection on the part of the teachers rather than more martial discipline would be my answer, although the idea that teachers should offer their pupils affection (however disinterested) is likely to alarm those many teachers in Japan who do not think it wrong to strike a child. Yet for those renaissance writers who took education as their theme (and who will be my theme hereafter) amity between teacher and taught was *a sine qua non*.

Four hundred years ago, Tokugawa Ieyasu's answer was to say that the nail which sticks up must be hammered down. Ieyasu was obviously familiar with the anarchic nature of his countrymen, since, no doubt, he had to control his own. Japanese 'wagamama' is far more powerful than anything equivalent in the British (or European) character, and although wagamama can be translated as 'wilfulness', it is a word with far greater social (and moral) significance than its English equivalent, and it is used on a daily basis as a term of rebuke: in Britain, the pressures to conform are much less ferocious since most people would not, if left alone, be quite as unrestrained and lawless as the Japanese tend to be when they think themselves safe from the censorship of their neighbours' eyes — which are the *de facto* overseers of much Japanese public behaviour.

For the last four centuries the practice of hammering down the nails has worked, after a fashion: but it is hardly likely to continue to work as Japan is increasingly compelled to take its place in a world where its economy is inextricably linked to those of its neighbours and



where “information highways” on the internet open up on every hand and tempt young people with the promises of individual fulfilment, which many of them appear to be more and more anxious to seize without much thought for the consequences. This may prove hazardous both for them and for their society because the pressures (and mores) of their society have always tended to deny the individual any real outlet for his, or her, individual gifts<sup>3</sup>.

I was recently asked to revise the English translation of a Japanese school brochure which, among other things, said “An individual is a basic unit of our society”. That seems, at least to me, to express that relationship the wrong way round: society should not come first: if it does, society will take on a totalitarian, dictatorial character: to some extent, this is still true of Japan, even today. Since I am a western liberal, I do not believe that human beings are ‘units’, nor that they should ever be treated as such, which is how they were treated by Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot, for instance, with the consequences in human suffering that are well-known to us all.

Human beings are living flesh and blood, with all the complex and conflicting emotions of individual human experience, and if we are to make the best of each individual’s particular talent, we ought, I believe, to start with the proposition that society is made up of unique human beings who contribute their own unique talents to the work of the communities in which they live. They can only do this, however, if those gifts, sought for while they are children, are then fostered by their families and teachers, so that they are able — when they have learned to master the skills they require — to make their own unique contribution to the immediate groups and families of which they are a part. The inflexible rote-minded bureaucrats who run the Japanese Ministry of Education do not believe this: they assume that it is more likely to

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disturb social harmony and thus lead to an abnegation by individuals of their responsibility towards the community. I do not believe that such an outcome follows, either naturally or inevitably.

That is to say, I do not believe that the development of individual gifts automatically entails indifference to the needs of society or implies that individuals will automatically put their own wishes first, to the detriment of their fellow citizens. Japanese society is rightly suspicious of individualism, if by individualism we mean an egotistic, selfish search for personal happiness that is likely to harm the well-being of our neighbours. I wish to argue that the development of individual talents need not entail self-absorption nor should it involve neglect of an individual's social duties, as long as we see our talents as gifts to be used rather than as rights to be claimed. We are likely to face intractable problems, as individuals and as a society, if we set out to seek for happiness as if it were a thing that we can both visualize as a possibility and grasp as a reality.

The deliberate pursuit of happiness is the pursuit of a chimera, and to enshrine it in one's constitution is surely a mistake, as the current predicament of the United States daily reminds us. When a hedonistic ethic is pitched in mortal battle against a puritanic legalistic creed, as it appears to be in the United States, society will be quite unable to achieve the kind of balance between personal fulfilment and social responsibility that I am suggesting is the kind of ideal which we, as educators, should hope to realise. Yet should we seek, self-forgetfully (which, in my view, is the crucial condition), to use our talents to their fullest extent — which will usually mean giving rather than taking (as Juliet said: "the more I give to thee, The more I have to give")<sup>4</sup> — we are likely to find (to stumble upon, as if by accident) a happiness that we did not set out to seek, and the fulfilment which comes from

knowing that others have benefitted from what we have been able to offer, or even to achieve.

On the other hand, when children are given no freedom of movement or any chance to express their own opinions they will naturally struggle to break free from such scholastic strait-jackets, and the only way for them to do so in a society dominated by a media which celebrates aggression may be by acts of imitative aggression: when children's personal talents are denied an outlet, then they are likely to seek personal satisfaction in anti-social ways. Yet if their personal gifts, and the employment of their special gifts, are sanctioned — are, indeed, loved and treasured — by society, then everyone will be better off, and, consequently, happier. If schools saw it as their prime duty to seek to find out, and foster, what children are uniquely good at — rather than to try to mould them into identical social commodities — then the children as they grow would be able to contribute their own special skills to the benefit of the community as a whole.

This implies, of course, that children cannot be simply left alone to find out for themselves how to use these gifts: employment of their talents need not be wayward: children's talents have to be fed and watered; children should be given skills to master, tasks to be completed. That is the teacher's job: to discover the child's talent and nurture it with appropriate exercises. As Alfred North Whitehead wrote in *The Aims of Education*, "Freedom and discipline", and the rhythm which they set up between them, "are the two essentials of education", words upon which I have reflected throughout my working life, as I have upon other *obiter dicta* which I found in that book<sup>5</sup>: "The habit of active thought...can only be generated by adequate freedom", yet "a certain ruthless definiteness is essential in education", too, for "the secret of success is pace, and the secret of pace is concentration". This

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is where, amongst the qualities a good schoolmaster needs (the patience, the fortitude, the selflessness, the firmness, the courtesy, the refusal to take offence), disinterested love comes into play as the agent which adjudicates and harmonises these sometimes warring needs<sup>6</sup>.

Naturally, this is all much easier said than done. And, of course, what Lionel Trilling very nearly but did not quite call ‘pedagogic love’<sup>7</sup> is an exceptionally difficult kind of love to handle when the pedagogue is an adult and the loved one is not: it requires committed attention, but it also demands heroic detachment: our love must never be possessive or demanding; it must always stand back. A great English mystic (Dame Julian of Norwich) once composed a prayer which is apposite: “Teach us to care and not to care: teach us to sit still” — our pupils must always come first; we must always consider their interests, never our own; we must never use them as means to an end; nor must we fuss over them: they must in the end do what they have to do. Nor must we be resentful when they betray us, which they often will<sup>8</sup>. Finally, we have to be ready to let them go, as Prospero (the mage) must, in the end, permit Ariel (his pupil) to go free, however hard Prospero finds it to break the pedagogic bond: there is one last charge, “My Ariel, chick”: “then to the elements, Be free, and fare thou well”.

This is an terribly hard kind of love to balance (it may, in performance, be only very rarely achievable), which is why, even when we know that we have to attempt it, most of us are incomplete teachers, and many of us should not be teachers at all. It is, anyway, so much easier to insist that children fit a given pattern rather than to work, with patience and self-forgetful consideration, to release the unique qualities of each child. Making children fit the prescribed mould does not require so much work, and it is the lazy teacher’s easy way out. The results, however, will be good neither for the children nor — not

even in the short run — for society as whole: yet just because the achievement of such a state of disinterested detachment (for the sake, as well, of our own immortal souls) may be virtually impossible, that does not absolve us from the duty of trying to rise to it<sup>9</sup>.

I am not, that is, proposing that we should do away with guidelines, either scholastic or moral: far from it: such guidelines as are based on the principles which human beings have over centuries tried and tested and come to believe are the most reliable models by means of which we may be able to conduct our lives, although we must be on guard against what Whitehead called “inert ideas” and mental dryrot”. Weighty philosophical issues are at stake here, of course. Is a child a *tabula rasa*, Locke’s piece of white paper, or does he come trailing clouds of glory (and with living, if fading, memories) from God who is his home? Do we, as newborn babies, come into the world knowing everything, or knowing nothing? Can we be left alone to discover by ourselves what, intuitively, we already know (or that we are programmed to know), or are we empty pots waiting to be filled?

Twenty-five years ago, influential writers like the Jesuit Ivan Illich thought that children should be left alone to find their own way to knowledge, since any kind of imposed education was social (and political) brainwashing and thwarted the child’s natural, spontaneous love of discovery. Yet most children do not have access to knowledge: not in Britain, at any rate, where many homes are bookless, where libraries have reneged on their duty to provide the best books they can house, and where a child’s *natural curiosity* is frequently frustrated or perverted by the relentless *unnaturalness* of modern urban life. Nor, in such a climate, can children be expected to develop the kind of moral awareness that Wordsworth believed could be absorbed from contact with a vernal wood. Goals need to set, skills learned, moral examples

offered<sup>10</sup>.

I again take my cue from Whitehead (rather than Steven Pinker): “The mind is never passive; it is a perpetual activity, delicate, responsive to stimulus. You cannot postpone its life until you have sharpened it”, but also “The problem of education is to make the pupil see the wood by means of the trees. Knowledge is related to perception”. I would add that our ability to perceive needs to be exercised, that without acquired skills we can create nothing of any significance, and that without knowledge of the past we can make no sense of ourselves or the present times in which we live.

Yet however all this is to be achieved, we, as teachers (or schoolmasters), must always put the children rather than society first: if the individual members of a society are damaged, then it follows that society, too, will be maimed. And if any fashioning is to be done, the tool must be fashioned to take the best advantage of its own particular material strengths and inherent qualities: you do not make saucepans from clay, nor pots from steel, but a well-stocked kitchen needs both, and both must be well-cared for.

The motto of the County of Cornwall is “One and All”: that is to say, each of us is an individual yet we each have responsibilities for everyone else: we work as a team, yet it is a team in which the individual is respected for his or her own personal talents and virtues: I learned this over forty-five years ago, when I did my National Service with The Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry: it took the county’s motto as its own, and, what is more, lived by it — as did the rest of Sir John Moore’s Light Brigade (although that is now history.) In the words of the Anglican Service (and we do not need to be christians to accept their truth), we are all members one of another, as most Japanese would perhaps agree when thinking of their immediate families. Yet this

does not presuppose conformity: it denotes mutual respect for each member's particular qualities, aptitudes and gifts, for our differences as well as our similarities, for that is the best way to get the best out of each of us as individuals for the benefit of all.

In all of this, of course, education is vital since it is in everyone's interests that children should be given the education that will enable them to realise themselves as *mature* human beings, capable of playing their part in a well-ordered community (although that begs a currently questionable proposition: are well-ordered communities even possible in today's global jungle, committed as it is to the ruthless, and often violent, pursuit of money and the satisfaction of our every whim?)

## 2: An Early Renaissance Vision

None of what I have just said is original, obviously: it has often been said before: it simply needs to be said again. I could return at least to Plato for citations, but for the moment — and to illustrate only the communal side of the relationship — I shall go no further back than to the fourth decade of the thirteen hundreds, and to the city of Siena, where, between 1338 and 1339, in the Sala della Pace of the Palazzo Pubblico, Ambrogio Lorenzetti painted a commodious, and compendious, allegory of good and bad government<sup>11</sup>. The room was used by the ruling oligarchy — the Nine — and the frescoes were to remind them of their function: which was to ensure the well-being and happiness of the commonwealth, the *res publica* (and it was this kind of happiness that the American Founding Fathers are reported to have had in mind, rather than the individual gratification which, today, most people believe to be the happiness that we all have a right to).

The frescoes which portrayed bad government (Tyranny) and the

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evils attendant thereon (furor, fraud, treason, division, cruelty and war, advised by avarice, vainglory and oppressive pride) have mostly disappeared, but those which depict the features of a just, and consequently happy, city have been singularly well preserved.

On an end wall, the kingly figure of Commune sits attended by Pax, Fortitudo, Prudentia, Magnanimite, Temperentia and Justitia. A second representation of Justice sits below an elevated figure of Sapientia; on either hand are pans, from which strings lead down to the seated figure of Concordia, who plays a small keyboard instrument laid across her knees. The twenty-four magistrates process, to the music of Concordia, along the bottom of the painting, making their way towards the depiction of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf. Magnanimitie, Temperentia and Justicia are supported by soldiers who guard a group of civil malefactors.

Fides, Caritas and Spes, the heavenly intermediaries (our spiritual guides), hover above the figure of Commune, Sapientia oversees Justice, while at the bottom of the whole ensemble a row of medallions enshrine the fundamental sub-structure upon which all this is based: Education, attended by the symbols of the elements necessary for the exercise of spoken authority: Grammatica, Dialectica and Rhetorica. God and his agents overlook us from on high, education supports us from below, the virtues wait on either hand, while all levels and varieties of mankind are harmoniously linked in one family. Peace takes centre stage, Justice punishes and distributes, Concord plays her instrument, the magistrates process with decorum, while hierarchichal relations weave the woof and the weft of the commune in one perfect fabric, each part contributing to the harmonious whole.

The side walls illustrate complementary images of good and bad government as we might observe them, non-allegorically, in the daily



life of the city and country. In the picture of bad government, again less well-preserved, Timor, the agent of robbery and tyranny, rules over a landscape of ruins, dead trees, deserted farms. His emblems are autumn and winter, Jupiter and Mars, the French *fleur-de-lys* (as the French were then the enemy), and other images of the works of tyranny.

The representation of the city and country in times of peace and prosperity has again been well cared for. The city wall of Siena, viewed in enfilade, divides the painting: on the left the city, on the right the surrounding countryside; merchants enter through the gate, riders depart for the country. The figure of *Securitas* watches over everything: in the city, shops, palaces, builders at work, a wedding procession; in the country, hills, farms, woods, harvested fields, men hunting and hawking, merchants passing through the landscape without fear of bandits or lawless soldiery.

What drew me to this picture in the first place, however, was the group which occupies the centre of the city square: a chorus of ten young women who dance sedately, in a circle that is yet serpentine, while their bodies compose themselves in the form of an arch (all three basic dance motifs)<sup>12</sup>. There are nine dancers and a musician, a girl with a tambourine (found in other paintings): she may be standing in for Apollo, since the nine ladies are the nine muses, and Apollo was their choregus, their leader. Memory was the mother of the muses, and the muses are the sources of all our best thoughts and inspirations: they always were and they still are, and if we ignore them (or seek to deny their everlasting relevance), we shall all be the more impoverished as a result<sup>13</sup>.

Lozenges, in a freize across the top of the painting, contain vignettes of Venus and Mercury (in his role as patron of learning),

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spring, summer, the moon, and the keys of St Peter, while in a similar band along the base are insets of arithmetic, geometria, astrologia, philosophia, the shield of Siena — and what was, for Frances Yates, the basic, all-embracing art: Music, which symbolizes and embodies the rhythms of life while giving order and harmony to the elements of which life is composed<sup>14</sup>.

A hundred years after Lorenzetti painted his frescoes, the renaissance was harvesting the ideas of the late middle ages, and one of the fruits was the seductively sweet apple of neo-platonism, which continued, for several more centuries, to entice writers, especially those with a poetic bent, not least in Britain, as artists and versifiers turned to Greece and Rome for inspiration while the classical languages fed the developing vernacular languages with a rich store of new words to express the exciting new concepts which the doctrines of neoplatonism provided.

The man who undamed these currents was Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), the first person to complete a translation of all Plato's dialogues as well as works by Plotinus (204/5-270), the first neoplatonist (if we discount his teacher, Ammonius, or an earlier platonist, Numenius). In his Florentine academy, Ficino made poignant attempts to harmonize platonism and christianity (of which Plotinus had been largely ignorant), believing that the ancient tales could be re-interpreted as valid symbols of christian truths. Where they could be interpreted with any supposed accuracy, Greek music and Greek dancing were studied, too, and where it was thought possible, they were also imitated. Music was the means of loosening the seal of hermetic wisdom so resistant to formal logic and rationality, since it was the voice of understanding deeper than words. Over this there was much dispute, and today we might suppose that in such a marriage one or other of the partners

would finally be silenced: yet much renaissance art was, and subsequent art has been, inspired by the possibility of such a fusion<sup>15</sup>.

These concerns were not then, and are not now, mere academic side-issues, of antiquarian interest only (as I shall continue to insist): they were (and might still be again) of vital importance in the education of citizens and particularly of those citizens who would be called upon to govern. At the same time, paradoxically perhaps, as these ideas began to move around Europe, the vernacular languages began to gain in authority as means to convey these ancient truths.

### 3: Sir Thomas Elyot

Sir Thomas Elyot (c1490-1546) was the first Englishman to take up this theme and in 1531 he published a book called *The Boke named the Governour*, which set out to instruct the king, Henry VIII, on the proper education that a prince should receive if he hoped to be a good governor of his people. (Ever since Aristotle tutored Alexander, philosophers have hoped to teach wisdom to those who rule.) Elyot was a suitable man for the job: he was a translator from the classical languages, and well-versed in the (mostly) Italian literature of his time that occupied itself with this theme, of which there was plenty. He was also one of the early masters of English prose: the fountain-head, it has been said, of its great 16th century vernacular surge, introducing words like 'mature' along the way<sup>16</sup>.

Such works had, in fact, been popular for a long time, and the Italians were especially prolific. Machiavelli is the most famous, but he had been preceded by the writers Pontano, Beraldo and Partrizi. Erasmus was famous for not being Italian. By all accounts (which, of course, I must take on trust, as you must take mine), Francesco Patrizi's

*de regno et regis institutione* is likely to have been Elyot's immediate source, although he does not acknowledge him, thanking only Pontano and Erasmus. Patrizi was Sienese (although later banished), a bishop of Gaieta (from 1460-94), whose manuscript was taken to France long after his death and published for the first time in Paris in 1518. Like *The Governour*, *de regno* ran into many editions thereafter and was translated into the vernacular Italian and French.

That Patrizi's work is the probable source of *The Governour* indicates how texts, in Latin, French and Italian made their way around Europe: learning was cosmopolitan and the English were famous for their proficiency in other tongues, which, now that English has acquired some sort of world hegemony, is no longer (at least for most of us) true!

Another work which based the art of government on sound learning was published in Venice five years before Elyot wrote *The Governour*, further evidence of Italian pre-eminence, and influence: Antonio Brucioli's *dialogi della morale filosofia*, which is a record, supposedly, of conversations held in the Florentine garden of the Rucelli family by a group of thinkers known as the *Orti Oricellari*. Indeed, during the fifteenth century, if such texts are to be trusted, well-born Italians (and Frenchmen in the sixteenth century) met constantly in private academies, often in the open air, to discuss the immediate concerns of their times: classical learning, the vernacular languages, neo-platonic christianity, political theory and practice. (The failure of the English to take up the habit may, one supposes, have been due to the unreliability of the British climate.)

Brucioli records the conversations of the *Orti Oricellari* (one of whose members was Machiavelli): on the active and the contemplative life, on matrimony, on family government, on education, on tyranny, on friendship ("for my part I firmly believe that if a man should ascend up

into heaven and survey the nature of the universe and the beauty of the stars, this glorious sight might not make him happy if he had no friend to whom he might communicate it”), on anger, on the distribution of property (“land ought to be private property in the sense of belonging to its lord, but common property in so far as the exchange or sale of its produce is concerned”), on the position of the Prince (“The Prince is in truth nothing but the physician of the Republic. And not all the parts of the soul are of the same value, but some command while others obey, and those which command are best, so the Prince is the summit of his people”), as well as on the practical training of the militia and the defence of the city.

Those who debated these questions did so in order to create, or to assist in the creation of, a just city. How could it be done? By the exercise of reason. How might reason be rightfully exercised? By proper training. By education. By training children: in mimic battles, mimic legal disputes, but above all by the study of the classic languages: in order to strengthen and purify the vernacular tongues, that the true and rational use of the vernacular should become an instrument of virtue.

I have spent time on Elyot’s Italian forebears since he introduced these notions to his native country, thereby awakening in his countrymen a neo-platonic desire to create out of the classical languages a flexible and powerful vernacular, while encouraging a concern, based upon classical precept mixed with biblical lore, for the ways in which men should govern. And I fix upon Elyot and his work since his influence was immense, on the continent as well at home: every educated Englishman would have read his booke, and many knew it by heart; seventy-odd years after its publication in 1531, King James I could still quote from it.

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The first of *The boke's* three books is a disquisition on the nature of the commonweal and of the education necessary for and the qualities required of a good governor, backed by remarks on justice and wisdom. Elyot's practice is to describe briefly the nature of what he wishes to commend, followed by extensive illustrations from the *Bible* and the history of Greece and Rome. The stories he tells along with the extensive new vocabulary that he introduces in which to tell them are woven through subsequent Tudor writing like the stable background woof of the century's more adventurous verbal tapestries: echoes of his phrases turn up everywhere, including the plays of Shakespeare; they even appear, as direct quotations, in T.S.Eliot's *Four Quartets* (and they are not the least beautiful part of that work).

Elyot must have been a man of considerable reading, although he is reticent about his sources (like me), since perhaps (like me) he had lost them and was no longer able to check his references; his knowledge of classical and renaissance texts was, of course, far greater than mine. His descriptions of the *res publica* (the public weal) would have been acceptable to the *Orti Oricellari*, would have been recognised by Lorenzetti, and would be repeated by Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*. "A public weal", says Elyot, "is a body living, compact or made of sundry estates and degrees of men, which is disposed by the order of equity and governed by the rule and moderation of reason.... Take away order from all things, what should remain?" "Untune that string," said Shakespeare's Ulysses, "and hark what discord follows." Elyot echoes Plotinus in believing that heavenly harmony mirrors an ideal harmony that we on earth should emulate: "everything is in order, and without order may be nothing stable or permanent..."<sup>17</sup>. There should be one sovereign governor, as there is one sun in the sky, but inferior governors are necessary to support him, and it is to the training

of these vicegerents that Elyot directs himself.

Yet where Elyot speaks to and for a King, his words are principally addressed to those who will instruct that King: the primary focus is on how children should be reared, and there is nothing old-fashioned about Elyot's prescriptions (which is why I attend to them). Children need careful guidance; they must be shown the good and what is evil must be kept from them; they must not be driven to attend their studies, however: they must be led with kindness. Their tutors must be temperate as well as kindly, and must be chosen with great care, for "by a cruel and irous master the wits of children by dulled"; their study must be inter-mixed with exercise, "such as playing on instruments of music", practices which calm the passions, as, in ancient Israel, they calmed the griefs of King David, although such pastimes must be used for recreation only. Children may also be taught to carve and paint, although the ostensible reason is pragmatic (and may be politic): that they may be more easily able to invent and draw engines of war. Such considerations always count.

A tutor should teach the classical authors Aesop and Lucian to beginners, without too much grammar: and "it were better a child should never read any part of Lucian than all Lucian". Thereafter the young scholar should tackle the *Georgics* and the *Aeneid*, and at fourteen, he — or in rare cases, like the Princess Elizabeth and the Countess of Pembroke (Sidney's sister), she — should study Cicero, Quintilian (the rhetorician) and Isocrates, cosmography and history, especially when it contained, as did the story of Alexander, excellent examples that the young could emulate. After the age of seventeen, the pupil may turn to philosophy, Cicero, Aristotle's *Ethics*, but, above all, to the works of Plato. The stories of Solomon's wisdom and the writings of Erasmus are also greatly profitable. Centuries later, Whitehead

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might, in principle, have agreed, for he led off with two commandments: one: "Do not teach too many subjects and teach them thoroughly"; two: "Throw all the ideas into combination".

At the end of the twentieth century, Elyot's programme may not seem at all 'relevant'<sup>18</sup> to contemporary needs (although this modish attitude would have baffled Elyot and the other writers I consider), yet its graded approach, from stories to rhetoric to philosophy, is still a sensible guide, and where Elyot, speaking of his own social arrangements, says that learning is not favoured by the nobility as it should be, we might, when he speaks of the nobility, today substitute a large number of British parents, and it would still be true: philistinism remains the great British vice. This, in Elyot's time, was because the members of the class for whom he was writing were too proud, too parsimonious to pay for a good schoolmaster, and were anyway indifferent (as are many parents today): why, they say, should a child continue his studies after the age of fourteen?

Because, says Elyot, only then can he develop a proper understanding of wisdom, and begin to learn how to deploy the arts of language. Although Elyot felt that poetry was devalued in his own time, he claims that in the poets we can discover true philosophy, while comedy reveals the folly of men, which being seen can the more easily be avoided. Since Elyot was a lawyer, he naturally believed that the law needed educated men to practise it, for the general benefit of the state.

His reasons for thinking that there are too few teachers might surprise the philistine British politician: there are too few good schoolmasters, he says, because there are too few good grammarians, and there are too few grammarians because there are few men who understand music, rhythm and philosophy: "without music grammar may not be perfect; forasmuch as therein must be spoken of metre and har-



monies, called *rhythmi* in greek”<sup>19</sup>. Frances Yates has taught us that French academicians of the sixteenth century argued the same thing: social order rested upon music, music as properly understood, as representative of all order and harmony. Not all the ideas, nor the ideals, of earlier generations are out of date or redundant.

Certain physical exercises also have their part to play in the creation of a good governor, mainly because they give mimic training in skills that will be necessary in adult life: wrestling, running (in order to escape from your enemy), swimming (for the same reason, with some notable examples), handling of a battle-axe, hunting and hawking, some of these exercises being in themselves “a right delectable solace”. Exercise preserves the health of the body and increases its strength (although swimming in the dirty Thames brought the life of Charles I’s elder brother to a sadly premature end, with all that that entailed for the future of England and the commonwealth): weight-lifting is encouraged, as well as tennis and the use of the long-bow, which, in its utility, “incomparably excelleth all other exercise”.

The activities of which Elyot approved, either for policy or because he really thought so, are clearly those which encouraged the acquisition of strength, the development of cunning and agility, the kinds of skill which will be useful in battle and which in their formal orderliness follow established rhythms and patterns. Dicing and transvestism<sup>20</sup> are vicious, however, and should be avoided, while football, which at that time lacked rules or form of any kind and was more or less a pitched battle, without discernible order or meaning, was especially condemned: football, “wherein is nothing but beastly fury and extreme violence; whereof procedeth hurt, and consequently rancour and malice do remain with them that be wounded”. A cynic might think that not everything has changed.

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Again, I was first drawn to this book for its emphasis upon dancing, since at this point, in seven remarkable chapters, Elyot discourses upon dancing's necessary and laudable skills: he defends terpsichorean art by pointing to its symbolic as well as physical virtue, and although he does not say that it is the most important of exercises, he devotes much the most space to it, supporting it with the full weight of his classical and neo-platonic learning. One of his more striking, and memorable, utterances might be seen as an attempt to verbalise Lorenzetti's frescoes, for commodious dancing is an image of that "necessary conjunction", a harmonious marriage. As the performance of Concordia leads to civil order, and as the Muses dance in a perpetual round, so "dauncing signifying matrimony, which betokeneth concorde", words directly quoted by his putative descendant T. S. Eliot in 'East Coker', the second of the *Four Quartets*.

Such a belief perhaps lies behind the ending of so many Shakespearean comedies, especially *As You Like It*, where in a ring dance, a branle (or brawle), four couples dance to celebrate their newly-established unions (although not all of them may be ideal, or destined to last long): "Then is there joy in heaven/When earthly things made even/Atone together". So opposites give up a little of their otherness in order to create a partnership: the lyre and the bow — as perceived by Pico della Mirandola (Ficino's disciple) or by Botticelli in his painting *Mars and Venus* — contrary principles which when yoked together create the most perfect harmony.

The second boke treats of the qualities needed by a good governor. He should have majesty, although inherited majesty is not enough: his should be natural: "which is the whole proportion and figure of noble estate, and is properly a beauty or comeliness in his countenance, language and gesture apt to his dignity, and accommodate to time,

place, and company; which, like as the sun doth his beams, so doth it cast on the beholders and hearers a pleasant and terrible reverence". That might have written for the benefit of Henry VIII, of course, who will not, one imagines, have been displeased with it. A king's majesty will reveal itself in his words and in his face: and Elyot translates from Homer: "But in thy words there is a right good grace,/And that thy mind is good, it showeth in thy face".

A governor should be nobly born, if the line he comes from is a good one: the long continuance of the good is better than otherwise. Nobility, however, does not depend on lineage alone: Elyot's choice example is the ploughman Quintius, who left his plough at the request of the senate and returned to it again when he had fulfilled his specific task. A governor should also be affable, for thereby he will gain the love of his subjects, and he must allow freedom of speech: he should also omit the chance of being revenged and rather be reconciled with the transgressor than punish him; he should be merciful, although that should not entail "vain pity", since punishment, as it was for Lorenzetti, may be true mercy.

What all this means is that a good governor should be benevolent, generous, beneficent, and we may, for 'governor', read 'schoolmaster', and not only yesterday's schoolmaster merely, but the schoolmaster of today: my point here is not historic or antiquarian: it is to look to the past to guide us in our behaviour now, if the wisdom of the past strikes us as being in tune with, at one with, what we believe should be our own consideration. "Experience and a willingness to accept counsel" were the final touches applied to the picture of the good governor.

It is while he is speaking of all this, that Elyot also speaks of that virtue which was for him, as it was for his neo-platonic predecessors, Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, the ultimate, overarching

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virtue, without which none of the others may be realised, the yeast which animates them: *amicitia*: for “*amicitia* comprehendeth those virtues more specially and in a higher degree”. This is the virtue which, with candour and passion, is praised in text after text and depicted in many paintings as man’s greatest achievement: the love that will lay down its life for its friend.

In prose that echoes the cadences of Tyndale and would be echoed by Coverdale<sup>21</sup>, Elyot says that “for... all thing that cometh of God, nothing is of more great estimation than love, called in Latin amor, whereof amicitia cometh, named in English friendship or amity; the which taken away from the life of man, no house shall abide standing, no field shall be in culture. And that is lightly perceived, if a man do remember what cometh of dissension and discord. Finally, he seemeth to take the sun from the world, that taketh friendship from a man’s life.” In *Agape and Eros*, Anders Nygren, a sometime bishop of Lund, made a careful distinction between eros and amor on the one hand, agape and caritas on the other<sup>22</sup>. By ‘*amicitia*’, Elyot appears to mean caritas rather than amor, whatever the etymology.

Such amity is also necessary in the relationship that must exist between a tutor and his pupil if the pupil is to grow in wisdom, strength, and the ability to govern well: the good schoolmaster will hold nothing back: he will be a giver and not a taker: “mutually putting to their study and help in necessary affairs, induceth love. They that be liberal do with-hold or hide nothing from them whom they love, whereby love increaseth...”. At this point, Elyot tells his longest story, with the greatest wealth of circumstantial and loving detail, the story of the friendship of Titus and Gisippus, so akin in amity that they are alike even in appearance: the twins of Plato’s *Symposium*, who would seem to have found each other at last (rather than Pico’s ideal marriage of

co-operating opposites). The book ends with a description of ingratitude and flattery, the very antitheses of the virtue that must be treasured above all others: *amicitia*.

Elyot's third book is devoted to Justice and its cognates. Justice is "a will perpetual and constant, which giveth to every man his right...", and its three parts are fortitude, prudence and temperance, the virtues which sit upon the right and left hands of Lorenzetti's *Commune*. Elyot proposes to leave commutative justice to another volume, a volume that he never wrote (as far as we know), and in *The Boke* deals solely with distributive justice: generosity, beneficence, giving out of your store not what you have to but what you think your neighbour needs. It is not difficult to achieve knowledge of justice: reason, society and knowledge will furnish us, these three, "which make a virtuous and most blessed conspiracy".

Reason bids us do to another what we would he should do to us. "Society (without which man's life is unpleasant and full of anguish) saith "Love thy neighbour as thou dost thyself". Sir Nathaniel in *Love's Labour's Lost* (4.2.) believed much the same thing: "for society — saith the text — is the happiness of life". Knowledge is found in the briefest sentence of all: *nosce te ipsum*: know thyself. The capital offences against justice (and our fellows) are (as they were for Dante) fraud and deceit. Since faith is the foundation of justice, breach of faith is the worst of sins, and the record of Christians in this respect is less impressive than that of heathens: "the Turks and Saracens have us therefore in contempt and derision, they having fidelity of promise above all things in reverence".

To illustrate fortitude, Elyot tells the story of Mutius Scaevola, who, failing to kill Porsena, admitted that he had tried to kill Porsena (who was besieging Scaevola's city). Porsena ordered a fire to be

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made for him. Scaevola went to the fire and placed his hand in the flames and held it there “with a glad countenance” until it had burnt to ashes. When he was about to do the same thing with the other hand, Porsena permitted him to return to the city and raised his siege, greatly moved by this example of resolute fortitude. In Bellini’s painting *The Redeemer*, Christ’s blood flows into a chalice as a symbol of his sacrifice: in a small panel in the background, Scaevola stands with his hand in the fire. There is no *incongruity* in the juxtaposition of pagan and christian but rather a loving and moving *congruity*, a pre-figuring of christian virtues in noble pagans. Did Cranmer at the stake remember and take courage from the example of Scaevola as he put his own hand in the fire? Fortitude is itself sub-divided into the taking of pains and patience. Of patience, Elyot says: “the mean to obtain patience is by two things principally: a direct and upright conscience and constant opinion in the estimation of goodness”. Obstinacy and ambition are vices: magnanimity (valiant courage) is the corresponding virtue.

Constancy can sometimes stand beside Justice: “Constancy is as proper unto a man as is reason, and is of such estimation, that according as it was spoken of a wise man, it were better to have a constant enemy than an inconstant friend. Whereof I myself have had sufficient experience”. And there, no doubt (if he is thinking of a King’s or a lover’s inconstancy), speaks the Tudor courtier and contemporary of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Wyatt (“they flee from me that sometime did me seeke”), who found themselves similarly served. Temperance is a moral virtue: “Plotinus, that wonderful philosopher, maketh an excellent definition of temperance, saying that the propriety of office whereof is to covet nothing which may be repented, also not to exceed the bounds of mediocrity, and to keep desire under the yoke of reason”.

All this may seem straightforward and self-sufficient: but neither these virtues, nor the cosmos, can flourish without a prime mover. The ruler requires knowledge and that proceeds from wisdom, or Sapience, and, as Solomon discovered, the fountain-head of Sapience is God. Just as easily, Elyot can turn to the Greeks for his necessary citations. The Muses, on the testimony of the Orphic hymns and Homer's interpreter, Eustathius, are "that part of the soul that induceth and moveth a man to seach for knowledge, in the which motion is a secret and inexplicable delectation". From Plato and Plotinus to Ficino and della Mirandola (some of whose works Elyot translated), this line of thinking runs like a Heraclitean river, the same yet never quite the same, always renewed.

Botticelli's *Primavera* is, for many scholars, a visual demonstration of this hermetic truth, and a modern commentator like Edgar Wind<sup>23</sup> has related its cyclic movements to the workings of *agape* as it operates in an endless rhythmic repetition of love received and given back: Zephyr inspires Flora, who is balanced by the three Graces, as Love shoots his flame-tipped arrow at Love by way of Beauty, while Mercury directs the eyes of the Lover to look through the Beloved back to heaven, and so on and on, for ever and ever. Orpheus had claimed that wisdom was the child of Jupiter and memory, and a neo-platonist would have no problems linking the words of Orpheus to the teachings of Christ: "God Almighty infused sapience into the memory of man (for to the acquiring of science belongeth understanding and memory), which, as a treasury, hath power to retain and also to erogate and distribute, when opportunity happeneth".

We only experience Sapience or Wisdom, that is, as a mediated gift from God: it is a parcel of his grace, bestowed on us through the medium of God's all-embracing love: *agape*. Classical and christian

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learning and belief, scholarship and mysticism, merge without embarrassment, and the sentences of Plato “may well accord with our catholic faith”. Understanding, which is a third part of the soul, is called, in Latin, *intellectus*, and it is that part of a man’s soul which reasons and decides: “it is to be remembered that the office or duty of understanding precedeth the enterprise of acts...” Solomon would have agreed, for Solomon said “a man that is wise by hearing shall become wiser, and he that hath understanding shall be a governor”.

While not all contemporary cognitive scientists are likely to hold with Elyot’s (or any other neo-platonist’s) views on how we come by knowledge and understanding, some incline that way, and his views are representative of classic renaissance thought on the matter: they also have their own poetic beauty, and may still offer illumination where, in our pragmatic, materialistic age, we no longer hoped to find any.

In an image that would once have been familiar to every schoolboy, the body of the state is likened to a human body and the prince must be the physician (so said the *Orti Oricellari*, too), while Menelaus in *Coriolanus*, who draws out the analogy in ironic and bantering detail, sees the belly as the Roman senators to whom all the other corporal members give tribute; or the state may be likened to a garden, the governors the gardeners (as Shakespeare, again, was to develop the trope in *Richard II*). The physicians and the gardeners, however, must know what they are about, and if they attend to the teaching of *the boke named the governour* they will learn the necessary skills: “And as a precious stone in a rich brooch they shall be beholden and wondered at, and after the death of their body their souls for their endeavour shall be incomprehensibly rewarded of the giver of wisdom, to whom only be given eternal glory. Amen.”

First and last, wisdom comes from God: Sapientia sits above



Justicia, below whom sits Concordia, from whose presence process the governors, the magistrates who support and sustain the commune. And in another place all shall dance together in a heavenly concord and harmony, in amity and peace.

#### 4: Baldassare Castiglione

The sixteenth century was, in England at least, one of the most fruitful in the publication of books that sought to teach members of the aristocracy how they should conduct themselves: as, that is, gentlemen. Two of the most influential of such books were Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528), first published in an English translation by Sir Thomas Hoby as *The Courtier* in 1561, and Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster*, published by Ascham's widow in 1570. Ascham's treatise was a practical manual for a teacher, which emphasised the value of translation from the vernacular into Latin and then back into the vernacular (the method advocated by Cicero); he also abhorred beating and had little time for foreign travel, particularly to Italy, where he found the morals shockingly lax. Castiglione's book, on the other hand, became, along with Elyot's *Governour*, the essential source book for the Elizabethan writer and courtier, and might perhaps be summed up in the motto of the fourteenth century William of Wykeham, the founder of Winchester College: manners maketh man. Men, that is, could make themselves, could — with guidance — fashion themselves, and, if rightly educated, they could turn themselves into true gentlemen.

Where Machiavelli, Elyot, and, later, Thomas Hobbes wrote of man and society, Castiglione, Montaigne and Richard Mulcaster, to whom I shall come, were more concerned with man as man. For Machiavelli and Hobbes, man is motivated by fear and greed, and in

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order to establish peace and order (the harmonious conduct of civic life), which are his responsibility, the Prince must understand virtue (*virtu*), must possess historical wisdom (*necessita*), and make full use of his luck (*fortuna*). Castiglione, on the other hand, places love at the centre of his argument, and focuses upon the good man, the man who is good in and for himself, man self-defined and self-achieved: whose glory is his personal excellence.

*The Courtier* elaborates upon “the conception of gentleman as ethical agent and an artistically structured self”<sup>24</sup>, where the good is the beautiful. It offers an ideal picture of an ideal man in an ideal court, in which there is no suppression of feeling but a balancing and harmonizing of the various potentialities of man: his self-realization rather than his salvation: in a court that is flexible, tolerant, rational, where the role of the prince, assisted by his court, is to foster intimate and personal values. It is perhaps significant that the dialogues through which Castiglione expresses these ideas are presided over by a woman (at the court of Urbino), since they construct an aesthetic world that prizes virtue rather than military prowess as the supreme good — a good which not only embraces the feminine virtues of kindness, compassion and purity, but also the civil virtues of gentleness, good temper, patience, civility and friendliness. The serene dance in which the courtiers, male and female, join is a human response to life’s brutalities.

The three words which sum up Castiglione’s ethical conception of the ideal man are *gravita*, *grazia* and *sprezzatura*: they are closely related. *Gravita*, which eschews false modesty, will nonetheless be dignified, restful, reticent; it will exemplify *festina lente*, moving fast slowly, and it will appear unforced, accidental: nothing will seem too laboured or obviously purposeful. *Grazia* comes with nature, and is an easy way of doing difficult things; there will be felicity of manner in

phrase and a natural happiness of expression; the graceful manner will avoid over-professional specialization and will show something of the old amateur spirit (as it used to exist on the playing fields of England). It will imply wholeness and universality.

*Sprezzatura* is a term with which we are still familiar, and might still come across in our daily reading: an Italian term for which there is no easy English translation, as we might, with suitable modifications (to take account of the passage of time) substitute gravity and grace for *gravita* and *grazia*. *Sprezzatura* is the art of concealing art: tasks will be performed with effortless ease and apparent spontaneity. In present day terminology, *sprezzatura* is cool without being shallow; it has aplomb yet is quite without affectation. It will reveal itself through a certain *recklessness*, although that does not mean quite what it means today: it is more like the spirit shown by the lilies of the field, that toil not neither do they spin, nor take they thought for the morrow: they enjoy the moment for its own sake. For whatever reason, these qualities seem to have appealed to the English gentleman, since from then on these have been his ideals — and even at times his practice: he has, at his occasional best, exemplified these virtues more completely perhaps than any other human species in history, and they have come down to us today in the spirit of the amateur, whose recent demise is seen by some as the cause of England's decline on the playing fields of the world.

The lessons were well learned, and it is a pity that so many now abed in England have, inspired by the media's worship of the uncultivated man of action and over-handly violence, thrown this out in favour of laddishness, hooliganism and loutish displays of uncouth maschismo. Yet even if today's preferred performance may be the very antithesis of the one endorsed by Castiglione, the underlying set of features remain

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perfectly constant: gesture, manner, clothes, hair, the use of the eyes and the hands, are all one: and “the whole man goes with the word”.

Castiglione favours a performance that appears artless but is based on most careful study, and for Vasari, the recorder of renaissance aesthetic theory and author of the *Lives of the Artists*, obvious effort destroys the grace of a painting or a sculpture: although hard study is, of course, necessary, it will hide itself. So the creation of the self may be likened to a work of art: we make ourselves by recognising and holding in harmonious equilibrium the various (and at times conflicting) demands of our multivalent human nature. This is the opposite of sterile conformity, however, which is in thrall to the demands of convention — not to be confused with social habit, which is an indispensable guide. The whole man will be one and will not be shaken by the various and contradictory responses of which he is capable. Ah, alas! If only that were possible!

## **5: Richard Mulcaster**

The Etonian Richard Mulcaster (c.1530-1611) was the first Headmaster of Merchant Taylor’s School where he taught, among other notable writers, the poet Spenser. He was a Hebrew scholar and a deviser of theatrical pageants. Later, he became High Master of St Paul’s School, and in 1581 published *Positions*, which he dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I, who gave him the living of Sandford Rivers, although not until 1598. A second edition was published in 1887, ed. by R. H. Quick, of which one copy can be found in the Bodleian. It was this copy that I read, walled-in by ancient bookstacks, on dew-fresh June mornings in 1969 as diapered sunbeams dusted off the ornate sentences, just as they might have illuminated newly-penned pages

towards the end of the sixteenth century itself.

Although Quirk is scornful of Mulcaster's over-elaborate, paratactic and antithetical style, I relished it and filled pages with quotations, some of which I mean to reproduce here. Mulcaster himself feels no need to apologize for his prose, and sees no occasion for false modesty: "Each country has its best ages: Such a period in the English tongue I take to be in our own days for both the pen and the speech... I need no example in any of these, whereof mine own penning is a generall pattern".

My own particular reasons for liking him will be obvious: in his Introduction, or *Elementarie*, as he calls it, he writes: "The end of education and training is to help nature unto her perfection, which is, when all her abilities be perfected in their habit... Consideration and Judgement must wisely mark whereunto Nature is either evidently given or secretly affectionate, and must frame education consonant thereto". This is actually a most surprising statement for a christian pedagogue to make. Would he have agreed with me that the secret affections of the boy dancing beside the Japan Sea were at that moment made evident, and that an education for him ought to have been framed consonant with what his actions and behaviour appeared to suggest would have suited his nature best?

Mulcaster writes in English in order to communicate most effectively with those whom he wishes to help and he is reticent about quoting authorities, because there is nothing needful in heaping up witnesses, just because such and such a writer said so—"but because the truth is so, and he said the truth, and the truth gave him title". So speaks the protestant conscience, although when it is compared with that of James Cleland (my next writer), it is not an especially puritan one.

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Education should be child-centred, and when to start a child's education will depend upon the child himself (or, in Mulcaster's scholastic dream academy, herself, too): "Some be hastinges and will on, some be hardinges and draw backe: some be willing when their parents will: Some but willing, when they will themselves...". To start with, beginners should be supplied with "pen and penknife, incke and paper, compass and ruler, a desk and a dustbox", to aid a child's skill in both writing and drawing, for "in these young years, while the finger is flexible, and the hand fit for frame, it will be fashioned easily".

Mulcaster is a rhetorician and rhetoric sometimes carries him away, for though proposing to discourse first about the body, he digresses to speak, at length, of Musick: "For the pleasantness of Musick there is no man doth doubt, bycause it seemeth in some degree to be a medicine from heaven, against our sorrowes upon earth...the princess of delights, and the delight of princes:..." He continues in the same rhetorical vein for some time, until aware that he is perhaps overdoing it he breaks off: "...and withal to staie my hand, for feare that I shall not easily get thence if I enter once in...it is verie comfortable to the wearied minde..."

He has a series of chapters on the need to strengthen the body as a means to strengthen the mind, on types of physical exercise, on the practice of speaking, of singing, of reading aloud, even of laughter and weeping: laughter is healthy, but you should not make children weep: "for weeping in the nature of an exercise, there is not much to be said."

He is carried away again, however, when he turns to dancing, both as exercise and accomplishment, and although he believes that in his day it is often misused and consequently discredited, it can be a means of simulating order and of stimulating its practice. After praising it for encouraging health, agility and courage, he admits that its delights

may lead to excess, but it will do well enough if we seek “to fashion it with order in time, with reason in gesture, with proportion in number, with harmonie in Musick, to appoint it so, as it may be thought both seemely and sober, and so best beseeme such persons as professe sobrietie”.

He praises the indoor exercises of fencing, wrestling and the top (the spinning top with whip), but considers that the prime exercise is walking: “When the weather suffereth, how emptie are the townes and streats, how full be the fields and the meadows, of all kindes of folk, which by flocking so abroad, protest themselves to be favourers of what they do, and delight in for their health”. When we run it is best to do so clothed: “He that runneth out of his clothes single or naked, sweateth much, which is much more healthful how little so ever it be, then much more with the clothes on...”: Mulcaster would have enjoyed the sauna.

There are chapters on leaping and skipping, on swimming, on archery (he recommends that we should read Maister Asham’s *Toxophilus*, the love of the bow), and on hunting, although his defence of hunting would not, these days, go down as well as some of his other recommendations: even so, its phrasing may suggest that he himself had a conscience about it, and needed to justify it. He appears to be quashing an implied, innate sympathy for animals when he argues, making use of the church’s canonical justification, that it is reasonable “to take beastes and byrdes, which are naturally appointed for man’s use, and therefore though they be taken and killed, there is no wrong done them”.

Hunting is healthy excercise, too, “for they that hunt, walke, run, leape, shout, hallow, and what they may not do, having the whole country for roome, and the whole day for time, to do in what they list”. Obviously, he was a Head Master who would have given his boys plenty

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of time off, to disport themselves in the fields, to do as they listed.

He even, by inference, has a good word for football, where most other writers dismiss it out of hand: “the abuse of it is a sufficient argument that it hath a right use...though as it is now commonly used, with thronging of a rude multitude, with bursting of shinnes, and breaking of legges, it be neither civil, neither worthy the name of any traine to health”.

Although my first quotation from *Positions* seemed to support the argument that teachers should treat each pupil as an end in himself, not as a means to the ends of the State, Mulcaster must of course place due emphasis on our duties: for which reason health remains a priority: “What a treasure health is, they that have it do finde, though they feele it not till it faile...The end of our being here is to serve God and our country, in obedience to persons, and performance of duties: If that be done with health of body, it is effectual and pithie: if not, then with sorrow we must shift the sooner and let other succede...”, which is practical enough, and not unreasonable. He does not defer to authority, however, when he argues that girls should be taught along with boys, and that although it would be undesirable for too many to be learned, it would be equally undesirable that too few should be. He would not, that is to say, have favoured mixed ability classes: well sorted wits should be placed, or sorted, together.

In all this, of course, like his fellow writers on such topics, Mulcaster was attempting to offer a blueprint for a civil society; and it is clear that it has at least some of its origins in the neoplatonic emphasis on *amicitia*: “the chief signs of civilitie be quietness, concord, agreement, fellowship and friendship, which likeness does linke, unlikenesse undoeth: fitnessse maketh fast, unfitnessse doth loose: proprietie beares up, improprietie pulleth downe: right matching makes, mismat-



ching mars". We are partial, that is, to those who share our tastes and attitudes. Yet though he appears to suggest that too much promiscuous social mingling might promote social discord, he would not have approved of today's Super Class and its concomitant under class: "The riche not to have too much, the poore not to lacke too much: the one by overplus bredeth a loose and dissolute braine, the other by under minus a base and servile conceit".

In other words, he was as occupied with, and as sensitive to, the competing values of equality and partiality as the most contemporary of modern political philosophers<sup>26</sup>.

He had a high estimation of girls, too. Since they show a "naturall towardness", we owe a duty to them, to help them to their perfection. Although cynics may suppose that this was intended to curry favour with the Queen (and if so, it was not, ultimately, unsuccessful), his flattery seems genuine enough. The education of girls has excellent effects, it is the custom of the country, and there are famous women to equal men. So says Plutarch. "And so do I." "Is it honorable for Apollo a man to have the presidencie over nyne wymen, the resemblers of learning? Then more honorable it is for our most worthy Princesse to have the presidencie over nyne men, the paragons of vertue...as they are in strife who may love her best, for being best learned?" Although Mulcaster has eschewed references, he seems to favour Plutarch, who wrote "of Eurydice the Epirote, that after she began to have children, she sought to have learning, to bring them up skillfully whom she brought forth naturally. Which thing she performed in deede, a most careful mother, and a most skillful mistress". Very like his Queen.

Mulcaster next considers the question of the merits of a private or a public education, and he decides, all things being equal, that a public education is best: "Education is the bringing up of one, not to live alone,

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but amongst others.” Seeming to echo Sidney and prefigure Milton, he asks “What vertue is private? wisdom to foresee, what is good for a desert? courage to defend, where there is no assailant? temperance to be modest, where none is to challenge? Justice to do right, where none is to demand it? what learning is for aloneness?”

He has given thought to the location of schools, for he had, after all, himself located the Merchant Taylor’s School: “I could wish that grammar schooles were planted in the skirtes and suburbes of townes, neare to the fieldes, where partely by enclosure of some private gound, for the closer exercises of more range, there might not be much wante of roome, if there were any at all...” He is in favour of the foundation of grammar schools, and though “this age has the best record for foundations”, he thinks it could do more: “There is wealth enough in private possession, if there were will enough to publicke education”. He considers that the morning hours are the best time for exercising the memory and conceiving, while the afternoons are best for repetition and stuff for the memory to work on.

He thinks that ushers (which is what the under-masters were usually called, at Shrewsbury known as ‘brushers’) are poorly paid, “for it is a great daunting to the best able man, and a great cutting off of his diligent paynes, when he shall finde his whole dayes travell not able to furnish him of necessarie provision...”, while, as a Headmaster, he expects any usher he appoints to be learned, which is only natural, and after that to demonstrate “*hardnes* to take paines: *constancie* to continew and not to shrinke from his trade: *discretion* to judge of circumstances: *lightsomeness* to delite in the successe of his labour: *hartines* to encourage a toward youth: *regard* to thinke ech childe an Alexander: *courteous lowliness* in himselfe, as if he were the meanest though he were knowne to be the best.”

I have always thought that that was a pretty impressive (and suitably inspiring) list, although for years I misremembered it, and acted upon the belief that what he had actually written was “*courage to continew*”, which I think is rather better, since constancy and continuance are too nearly allied in meaning, while the courage to continue is indeed what the average schoolmaster most often needs. (I had intended to call this piece “The Courage to Continue”, but have now thought better of it.)

Mulcaster believed that a school needed rules and ordinances and that these should be published, and that while there should be uniformity of teaching, each child should move at his own pace, since over-hasty promotion is a canker: “The hasting on too fast to see the frute too soone, when circumstances perswade tarrying, is to winne an houre in the morning, and to lease the day after...” Read histories for pleasure, poets when we are disposed to laugh, Plato for everything that he wrote, but we must take care when selecting which profane authors a child should study and ought to turn to the most respected of rhetoricians, Quintillian, “in chusing of writers for children to learne, to picke out such as will feede the wit with fairest stuffe, and fine the tongue with neatest speach”.

While schools should confer with parents and neighbours to decide on how best to serve society, the child comes first: “For *gentlenesse* and *curtesie* towarde children, I do thinke it more needeful than beating, and ever to be wished, because it implyeth a *good nature* in the child, which is any parentes *comfort*, any maister’s *delite*. And is the nurse to *liberall wittes*, the maisters *encouragment*, the childes *ease*, the parentes *contentment*, the banishment of bondage, the triumph over torture, and an allurement to many good attempts in all kindes of schooles”. To all of which, I should still say “Amen!”

## 6: James Cleland

James Cleland published *The Institution of a Young Noble Man* in 1607, and dedicated it to Prince Charles, who later, when King, lost his head: it cannot, therefore, have done him much good. There is also more in Cleland with which one might disagree than I personally find in Mulcaster, but still enough of interest to make him worth reading. Unlike Mulcaster, Cleland takes a traditionally patriarchal (and misogynistic) point of view, and begins his discussion with the choice of wife, who should be comely, wise, sober, and nurse her own child, whose raising is of prime importance: “bad children do become worse young men, and die most bad old men...To purchase this Parke, that Farme, this Baronie, or that house for your Sonne, and to have little of no regard of purchasing Wisdome and Vertue, is [as Crates cried out in Choller] to love your shoe better than your foote”<sup>26</sup>.

Your son’s tutor should be the best you can find. There are precedents: “Philip of Macedon said that hee reioiced more that hee had Aristotle to be his Sonnes Tutor, then that hee had Alexander to be his Sonne”. Unfortunately, many men of his own time “more regard their horse-boy then their Sonnes Tutor, they denie it in words but confirme it in deeds.” You should remember that the child will imitate his Tutor, but do not blame the Tutor for your son’s faults. You should not choose the tutor from a university but from the King’s court at *Nonsuch* (for “The Nine Sisters have assembled there”). You must treat the tutor with reverence, and choose the boy’s serving man with just as much care, since he will also need to be a good and wise counsellor: make sure that a sufficient financial allowance is granted them — but don’t let it fall into the hands of a woman!

Book Two details the duties of a tutor. Firstly, he needs to

understand the nature of his pupil since natures will vary and must be treated variously. In this, Mulcaster and Cleland agree, although Cleland is talking only of the private pupil, whereas Mulcaster is thinking of a classroom of children. In the case of ingenuous children, say, who seem wise yet prattle foolishly, they should be treated “verie gently”: “for he that would have a Rose or a Violet to smell sweetly, he must not crush them in his hands, or burn them in the fire. These should have greater liberalitie then others”<sup>27</sup>.

The Tutor must encourage curiosity by using the Socratic method of asking questions, praising the answers, which will lead to other questions. There is no one from whom we cannot learn: the child must be encouraged to perceive the catholic (the all-embracing) countenance of nature: “as Socrates being asked what countrie man he was, answered wisely, of the world”. The child’s conscience and will must be strengthened; his manners must be fashioned, so that he grows courteous and considerate, easy and self-confident, direct and unaffected in speech, pleasant in temper. When it is necessary to correct faults, do not upbraid him, but admonish him in private: “with meekness and gentleness correct him that he may take heed”.

If Cleland would have approved of beating the lower orders, he does not say, but “For strokes, I wil no more remember them, in teaching a young Noble man than Plato made mention of anie punishment in his Common wealth. It must be love of vertue herself, honestie and honour, that shall retain our Pupil within the limits of wel doing, or els, the ougliness of sinne, the reproach of his friends, or the displeasure of his own minde. Where Reason and meeknes cannot work, force and fear will never prevaile”. W. B. Yeats, though, held the opinion that Aristotle had “played the taws Upon the bottom of a king of kings”<sup>28</sup>.

The Tutor must pay more attention to judgement and wisdom than

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to knowledge, he must make sure the pupil is well-grounded in basic techniques, and he must not go too fast or use terms which the pupil will not understand. (Whitehead would have agreed: "The ancients saw clearly — more clearly than we do — the necessity for dominating knowledge by wisdom", although he went a little further and argued that "the only avenue towards wisdom is by freedom in the presence of knowledge".) The Tutor must correct compositions gently by suggesting that Cicero would have used this word rather than that, while not worrying too much about the dates when things happened or the places wherein they did.

Although, like Mulcaster, Cleland is obviously sensitive to the individual needs of the young man being taught, he is no less concerned with the young man's ultimate duty, which is first to God, the creator of the world and of the senses through which we perceive the world: "God may be felt with the hands, smelled with the nose, and heard with the ears: albeit with the senses of the mind he is inscrutable". The boy must follow the *Bible*, his conscience, and his Majesty, who saved us from Rome; he has a duty to his country (which is our mother as the king is our father), for which he must be ready to sacrifice himself. Perhaps Cleland had little option but to take this protestant (and renunciatory) line, yet he does seem a much more committed member of the reformed church's party than Mulcaster, who is inclined to adopt a more catholic approach.

Nevertheless, Book Three (a boy's duty to God) is relatively short, while Book Four — a boy's duty to his parents, his Tutor and Learning — is longer and more emotionally involved. Fathers have full authority as our begetters after God, and we must support them, consult them, and bury them handsomely. *Love* will be the bond between the pupil and Tutor, whom the pupil will consequently honour and obey (because

he loves him), “for Love [as Parmenides holdeth] is the efficient of all things” (in logic, the “efficient cause” is what makes a thing what it is). Learning is profitable for discovering exempla in history, yet history is delightful, too: “Laugh upon the three sisters when you come to make love unto the Iupiter’s thrice three daughters. You must make an offering unto Venus before ye enter into the scholle of Athenes”. Clearly, the three Graces and the nine Muses mean as much to late sixteenth century English tutors, even misogynistic ones like Cleland, as they did to the neoplatonic Botticelli and the city fathers of Siena.

Cleland, too, offers a graded course of learning, but has his own order of precedence and suggests that grammar should be followed by logic, rhetoric coming at the end: the emblazoned coping stone, perhaps. Like Mulcaster, he thinks that a sensitive child must not be pushed on too quickly, especially if he is likely to become bored, or tired by being asked to comprehend something which his lack of experience will preclude: “A man loseth his time that runneth, run he never so fiercely in the beginning, if hee become wearie before he come to the race’s end, as many young gentlemen do, who in their infancy were admired for their aptness to learning, and prompt speaking of elegant Latin, being men who have not onlie forgotten to be congruous...but which is worse, have al learning in derision; and in scorne thereof will speake the most barbarously they can imagine”, which suggests that Cleland must have sometimes been sorely disappointed in his pupil’s ultimate ways of life and conduct. Modern schoolmasters might also be able to refer ruefully to similar disappointments.

Pupils must also be instructed in necessary knowledge of laws, with special reference to classical history, and must learn to judge which books require only a short stay (being read lightly) and which a longer stay (being read deeply). Like Mulcaster, Cleland approves of Greek

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and Latin history, especially the works of Plutarch (who clearly vies with Plato for the laurels): “in whom pleasure is so mixed and confounded with profit, that I esteeme the reading of him as a paradise for a curious spirit to walke in at al times, and a fountaine of al learning for an ignorant (pupil)”.

The pupil should also read the chronicles of his own country, but the only book in English which Cleland actually mentions by name is Sidney’s *Arcadia*. French and Italian history is worth reading, too, even Boccaccio, “except his *Decameron*, which is ful of idle, wanton, and bad inventions, and worse discourse”. Indeed, such works are as hurtful to the young as Machiavelli is damaging to the old: tales of “lascivious love, which inflame the concupisence of youth”. Their style is obviously as odious as their matter (the two are indeed perhaps indivisible), and Cleland’s style rises to his own heights of rhetoric to condemn them: “Bee not allured of their fine phrases, inkehorne tearmes, swelling words, bombasted out with flocks and scumming of sundrie strange languages: they will tie you in the fetters of lust, and keep you in the thoughts of love: they are like an Apothecarie’s gaybox, painted without and full of poison; they have glorious outsides and goodly titles, but within they are ful of strange venome”, and so on, swelling bombastically himself in a positive passion of recrimination.

He explains how we are to make use of our reading: learn to distinguish the three manners of writing, the dogmatic, the ethic and elenctic (the use of syllogisms to refute syllogisms); read the parts (in Plato and Aristotle, for instance) with great care and search to know for ourselves what is meant; make marginal annotations and then write out what is most significant in “your Booke of Common Places”—so that we may have apt quotations always at hand. We must beware, though, of poetry: “I am so afraid of Poësie, that I dare not counsell you



to read much thereof privately, it is so alluring, that whosoever is not aware shall be enchanted by this minister of voluptuousness, and so inticed, that he will have none other delight, then to lie sleeping in pleasure". Be always ready, however, to listen to good counsel, to take it, and to learn to meditate: "For meditation is the fountaine of all good counsel and wisdom, the rule of all affaires, the mother of all learning, and in a word, the engenderer of all vertue".

Book Five attends to our duties in "Civil Conversation". Goodness comes by practice of the four cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Force (by which he must mean Fortitude, courage or bravery), and we must make a comparative study of virtue and vice so that we may understand their effects.

Prudence is the "Queene and Sovereigne Ladie" of virtues, the salt, the seasoning, the square, the rule, and prudence requires that we must always be prepared to be adaptable, which Cleland calls 'accommodation': "It is a great wisdom for a man to accommodate himselfe and to frame his manners apt and meete for all honeste companie, and societie of men: as to shewe himselfe discreet among the wise, merry with those that are merry: and to mourne with those that mourne". (Although this may look like hypocrisy, it is really a kind of friendly modesty and easy-going generosity: that consideration for others which might once have been called 'condescension' without any of its modern tinge of patronising superiority<sup>29</sup>.) "This maketh those famous captaines Epaminondas, Scipio, Laelius, Agesilaus, and the Coryphaeus of Sages amongst the heathen to be no less renowned for their dancing, singing, gathering of cockles, and riding upon the staffe with young children, than for their glorious victories in the warres".

Indeed, of course, this is one manifestation of that virtue which we have already noted as being of supreme importance for the neo-

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platonist: *amicitia*, amity, without which the life of man is nothing. Our feelings of amity will express themselves in all our doings and dealings, in our walk and in our greetings: it will show itself in reverence to the king and courteousness to his companions, with “diversity according to the diginity of the person”; one must never omit to show politeness, since it would be an “evident token of little good wil towards your friend or acquaintance, and in place of amitie, enmitie wil take possession”. This should not be taken as evidence of insincerity since flattery is an offence: one should not converse with flatterers (or inferiors), and it is important to know friend from flatterer: the first supports you, the second betrays you.

What all this amounts might today be thought of as sensitivity to others and the tact with which we ought to treat others, in manner or speech. “The Tongue is nearest to the hart by the roots”, while speech “the image of the minde, and messenger of the heart, whereby al that is within a man shews itself”. We should speak plainly, perspicuously and truthfully, and should not try to dominate a conversation: “Speake not al alone, nor interrupt not others in their speech: but heare patiently awaiting your turne”.

We must speak with sensitivity to the person whom we are speaking to, and we must never condescend (in the modern sense of the word): “Applie ever your words to the capacities of them you speake unto: for I think he plaieth but the part of a selfe-conceited foole that sheweth himself eloquent to them that understand him not. Sometime a man must seem ignorant, that hee maie be accounted wise”. We must not blaspheme nor speak bawdily of the dead, nor, indeed, maliciously of anyone. We must know when to keep silent.

Cleland approaches his neoplatonic sources most closely perhaps, and with the most intimate personal (and revealing) commitment (or

give-away, if one feeling in a deconstructionist mood), when he advises us to love one friend above the rest; indeed, he is speaking from the heart (uninfluenced by sources), and we may guess from his unguarded effusion why he has less time for women and girls than Mulcaster. Your friend, akin to the separated twin-bodies of the *Symposium* (like Elyot's Titus and Gisippus, but unlike Pico's opposites in compatible marriage), should be at one with you in all things: "it is your selfe you are seeking, and it is your selfe, whom you must give away, and receive". Cleland has such a friend, and "Since the daie of our parting, my pleasures have augmented my griefes,...for we are halfe in things, and ever shal bee Deere B. Wallace!"

This is a surprising, and touching, interpolation, and its emphasis upon twinship may perhaps suggest that there is an element of narcissism in the homoerotic tendency, while the seeking out of the complementary opposite, the "necessary conjunction" of a companionable marriage, may be what distinguishes the heterosexual (of either sex). There might be, it has to be admitted, a similarly narcissistic element in the schoolmaster's looking upon his favoured pupils as other selves, as himself given a second chance — as, in my partial reading of *The Tempest*, Prospero and Ariel embody, at least in part, such a relationship of pedagogic love.

As for the other more general social virtues which we must all cultivate, Cleland counsels us to keep our promises, since "faith is the band of al humaine societie and the foundation of al Justice", and "if you have made a promise, for the Lord's cause keep it, although it be to your enemy". We must be liberal, generous with our goods, which we should give away willingly, anonymously; we must be grateful (not that one should ever give simply in order to receive), temperate, continent, moderate in diet (but don't be a dog in the manger and in foreign

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countries eat what your hosts do), sleep in God's time but moderately, and do not waste revenue on apparel, wearing your lands upon your back. Long hair is unnatural.

Cleland is altogether more grudging than Mulcaster in his praise of recreations, his disposition more puritanical here as elsewhere than that of the High Master of St Paul's. Recreations are not crafts, and the most important (for military reasons) are riding and shooting: we must know our horses and read Ascham's *Toxophilus* on archery. Again, we must know how to run, swim, wrestle and handle arms (although all with moderation). His Majesty has permitted some house games (which obviously includes some which involve risking money), but we must play them only for recreation, must play fairly and for only small hazards; we must, however, abstain from diceing, while stage plays (in spite of his Majesty's not having actually forbidden them) are degenerate: "they may be named now the store-house of all wickednesse: for therein is painted a Sodome of filthinesse to bee sold: and no things but tales of carnal love, Adulterie, ribaldrie, Lecherie, murther, rapes, interlarded with a thousand uncleane speeches: there you shall not onlie have your manners corrupted in hearing these scandalous and scurrilous Dialogues, but also in seeing their gestures".

This continues for a page or two more: Cleland did not like the theatre. Others did, however, and the first Headmaster of Shrewsbury (founded in 1552), Thomas Ashton, was a great believer in the drama for schoolboys, and put on some notable pageants (as did Richard Mulcaster). Such differences between Mulcaster and Cleland, here as elsewhere, may point perhaps to a divergence of temperament in people who are in general principles otherwise like-minded: the catholic spirit which embraces all things and the puritan spirit which is afraid of its own emotions. If Ficino's marriage of neoplatonism and christianity is

likely to come apart it is here: where the gap begins to widen between a neoplatonic humanism that accepts variety and a religious fundamentalism that rejects all but strait-laced conformism and is suspicious of all expressions of sensory pleasure.

In Cleland's evident distaste for spending time to learn how to play an instrument — a distaste not shared by Castiglione, Elyot and Mulcaster — we may also catch an echo of the English philistine's dismissal of what is not of immediate practical usefulness (that trait which Napoleon derided as the Englishman's shopkeeper mentality), coupled, ironically, with an aristocratic contempt for those who must earn their own living and a suspicion of the artist whose behaviour is in any way unconventional: the communal virtues here obviously take precedence over the development and expression of personal aptitudes, and again point to something fundamentally different in attitude between Cleland and Mulcaster, for all their common desire to benefit the child, and in so doing to benefit the State, which, in both their cases, means the person of the Prince: which means, of course, in Cleland's case, James I; in Mulcaster's, Elizabeth.

“Delight not also to bee in your owne person a plaier upon instruments, especiallie upon such as commonlie men get their living with: because you maie imploy your time better than so: and for the most part we see that those who are most given to plaie upon them are fantasticke and full of humours, accounting more sometimes to the tuning of their Lute, then to the entertaining and pleasant companie of their friends.” Such an opinion as this encapsulates several of the diverse prejudices against the arts that are still common themes of the British popular press and of the country's opportunistic (populist) politicians.

We face, besides, three mortal enemies in our pursuit of the kind of

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improvement in manners and morals that Cleland's book is designed to teach us: we face and must conquer self-love, ambition, and painted ladies. Love is Circe's cup, and must be rejected, as it will be rejected in Milton's *Comus*, soon to be played, as the masque that brought an end to the masque, at Ludlow Castle in 1634. But before you settle to the company of *virtuous* ladies, you should travel, and with Book Six, a short book, in which travelling is described as a man's best means of profit to his Prince, his Country and himself, in the education of Prudence, Cleland concludes, somewhat abruptly, his *Institution of a Young Noble Man*.

### Conclusion

My instinct is to come to an equally abrupt halt, since this essay is already a good deal longer than the space originally allotted it; but it is perhaps necessary to draw out some of the themes that these old writers tackle, those themes with which I am in sympathy and from which we, as teachers (British as well as Japanese), might still profit.

Japanese teachers, for instance, might well take careful note that all the English writers I have discussed express a horror of corporal punishment. In this, as in many of their stipulations, they are a good deal more humane than many teachers right up until our own time, since only recently did the British government outlaw corporal punishment.

I once talked to the Headmaster, then just retired, of the Edinburgh school where, a few years earlier, Prime Minister Blair had been a pupil. The man, who was to die suddenly two weeks later, told me that every boy should be beaten once a term at least, for the good of his soul; he had previously been Headmaster of Eton, until the Governors

decided that such an attitude could no longer be tolerated: Fettes was more indulgent to his predilections. Earlier, he had been a prisoner of the Japanese in East Asia, a strangely paradoxical man, since as well as taking pleasure in beating boys, he loved to be on a par with them, to treat them as his friends, and to be treated as a friend in return. He also told me a strange story, too long to retell here, the gist of which, however, was that a schoolmaster should be witty with his pupils, lightsome, not at all harsh in his verbal manner, ready if a pupil mocked him to make gentle fun of the pupil, but always with a delicacy that would not dampen, but rather encourage, enliven, and act as a spur to the pupil's own lightsome, and gamesome, spirit.

This seems more in tune with the views of both Mulcaster and Cleland: that the schoolmaster (or university professor, if it comes to that) should not set himself up as a god-like authority, should not look down on his pupils, should not condescend or pontificate, should not behave arrogantly or contemptuously towards his charges, should never humiliate them in front of their fellows, should never do anything, in fact, to damage their self-respect (and so stifle their ingenuous desire to learn), but should conduct himself with modesty and self-effacement, treating his pupils as searchers after knowledge no less to be honoured than himself, and as worthy therefore of being treated with complete seriousness and no less respect: as, in a sense, equals in the search for wisdom.

In Japan, however, it is not unusual for a university teacher to treat his pupils (even his colleagues) with disdain (for having less status than himself), nor is it thought odd for a teacher to harangue (and thus harrass) a student. Indeed, when a games master was recently charged for inflicting injury on a student, he seemed aggrieved, because if he were to be disciplined other teachers might not be free to use physical

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punishment, either: it clearly did not occur to him that he was culpable of a moral misdemeanour. I myself have observed seniors of a university club dressing down, in shockingly aggressive language, club juniors who hung their heads in shame, yet who would, very likely, behave in the same way themselves two years thereafter. Although I watch television very rarely, at times I play the channels to see if anything is worth watching, and I have stumbled on dramas in which policemen use frighteningly violent language as they cross-examine suspects, conduct which is taken to be natural and appropriate: Japanese culture accepts violence, either verbal or physical, as a legitimate means by which those in authority discipline those without it, who will themselves behave in the same way when power at last comes their way: prisoners of war were treated little differently from prisoners at home.

The writers studied here all favour a quite different method: the method of leading the pupil gently, with courtesy and with sympathy, to the discovery of his (and these days it would also be her) true skills and interests. The bond between the teacher and taught is not the bond of fear (which kills the desire to learn), but the bond of love, for only where there is love will there be true learning, and only where there is learning will there be the true knowledge which leads to wisdom. Where, in a Japanese school, a precocious child may be rejected and passed over for being different (and thus difficult), Elyot, Mulcaster and Cleland all counsel us to treat that child with special care, with the special tenderness you would show to a delicate plant which would die if it were roughly or insensitively handled. Indeed, they all three show (what might seem unexpected in men of their times) great sensitivity to the physical as well as the mental health of a child, Mulcaster believing clearly not only in the exercising of the body athletically for its own sake (as well as for its military practicability), but also for the refresh-



ing therapeutic sense of physical well-being which accompanies it, while music, along with its stimulus to mental agility, also offers balm to the soul. They would not have taken issue with A. N. Whitehead, writing three hundred years later, when he warned the neophyte pedant that the teacher will fail the moment he forgets that his pupils have bodies.

Although Elyot and Cleland are speaking only of a tutor's individual pupil, the same principles, if they are correct, must surely apply regardless of how many pupils a teacher may have under his or her care. Mulcaster, who is thinking of children in a public school, is even more emphatic in his concern for the individual student, the speed of whose progress must be carefully judged according to the teacher's assessment of the student's aptitudes and particular needs. They take this approach not only because they think that it is in the best interests of the pupil, but because it is also in the best interests of the society in which that pupil will, as an adult, take his (or her) place, and since no virtue can be found in goodness practised in private, the pupil must be prepared for the exercise of public virtue, which will consist of ethical graces, tested by time (since nothing is original): the eternal virtues, fortitude, temperance, justice.

If you are a post-modernist or a deconstructionist, little of this makes sense, since your beliefs presuppose that there are no virtues, or that the classical privileging of the three renaissance virtues, for instance, will have marginalised virtues which are perhaps more (or at least equally) important. And though our three authors also praise courtesy, tenderness and charity (which is another name for amity), even these virtues are dismissed by contemporary iconoclasts, who hold that nothing has intrinsically more value than anything else.

At the same time, modern theory dismisses the study of the classi-

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cal authors as not relevant, or as demeaning to students who come from cultures alien to that of the writers of those texts: the children must be given only contemporary texts to read, to the exclusion of anything outside the limits of their own immediate, and usually narrow, horizons<sup>30</sup>. Our authors, on the other hand, seem generous, liberal and far-sighted in offering a wide-ranging intellectual diet — a diet that may not, of course, have suited everyone, but which was chosen because it would put the students in touch with what was considered at the time to be the best that was known and thought. It also offered them the tools — of logic and rhetoric — to make the best use themselves of all that had ever been known and thought.

To accept what the taste (as well as the test) of time has sanctioned does, I agree, beg the question of what is best (if anything is), but the verdict of earlier readers should not be lightly thrown out to please the dictates of the politically correct, and although today's pedagogues are shy of making such assumptions — since swayed by those who argue that there is something imperialist in choosing what texts all children should read — I would argue, on the other hand, that if you do not make an effort to extend a child's horizons, his sympathies, his general knowledge, or his vocabulary, you are committing him to a parochialism that blinds itself to the realities of life outside its own backyard. That seems dangerous (as well as dehumanizing), since it deliberately blinds us to the actual presence of persons (with their needs, hopes and fears) whom we do not know, but whose lives our blinkered actions may radically affect<sup>31</sup>.

Elyot, Mulcaster and Cleland knew nothing of our modern scruples, and the texts they cite not only provided the basic texts in their own day, but remained staple fare in traditional western schools until only recently. These classic texts may no longer serve us well, but we shall

still need replacements that must be the best that we can provide, not the ephemera that so many modern school children are fobbed off with because they must not be asked to challenge anything that is too difficult, or that will stretch their minds, or that will open their minds to worlds removed in time as well as place from their own. Yet stretching and developing minds — so that they will be able, as adults, to act with wisdom, courage and justice in the performance of their civic duties — is what the renaissance writers of the courtesy books and manuals of government were concerned to recommend. If we behave with civility towards our fellow citizens, we may feel similarly obliged to treat those whom we do not know with equal civility and respect. I cannot, for myself, help thinking that education carried out with these aims in view really is the better and more suitable approach<sup>32</sup>.

### Notes

(I am grateful to Mr Koji Asai who went along to the new British Library (London) to check some of my bibliographical facts.)

1 *Kyouiku Sorachi* (The Bulletin of the Sorachi Institute of Education), No 558, May, 1998.

2 'Resolution and Independence', lines 43/4. I wanted to say "who perished" but "that perished" is what Wordsworth wrote.

3 One is fearful that, should there be an explosion, the destructive energy it releases is likely to be in proportion to the degree of enforcement with which their creative energy has been suppressed. A recent series of articles in *The Japan Times* (August 26-9, 1998), however, has addressed many of the issues raised by this essay, which seems to suggest that The

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Ministry of Education, Mombusho, is, at long last, beginning to realise all this, and if it can act in time, the worst may be avoided — unless, thanks to the forthcoming global crisis, everything blows up in our faces.

4 My bounty is as boundless as the sea,  
My love as deep: the more I give to thee,  
The more I have: for both are infinite

*Romeo and Juliet. 2. 2. 133-5*

5 Alfred North Whitehead was Bertrand Russell's tutor and collaborated with Russell to write *Principia Mathematica*. I read Whitehead's *The Aims of Education* (London, 1929) while I was studying for a Diploma in Education at Cambridge more than 40 years ago, and I have kept close at hand ever since the handful of notes which I took at that time.

From those notes, I should like to quote the following aphorisms: "Style in art, style in science, style in logic, style in practical execution have fundamentally the same aesthetic qualities, namely attainment and restraint"; "Interest is the *sine qua non* for attention and apprehension", "Joy is the normal healthy spur to the elan vital", "Get your knowledge quickly, and then use it. If you can use it, you will retain it", "The second-handedness of the learned world is the secret of its mediocrity", "Art and literature have not merely an indirect effect on the main energies of life. Directly, they give vision," "The Benedictines saved civilization by linking knowledge, labour and moral energy", and "The teacher has a double function. It is for him to elicit the enthusiasm by resonance from his own personality, and to create the environment of a larger knowledge and a firmer purpose". Each of these, of course, could be the starting points for another series of essays.

Other (now mostly forgotten) writers who affected my thinking while I was an undergraduate (in the 1950s) were Gerald Vann, OP, and Bede Griffiths, OSB, a Dominican and a Benedictine, who emphasised the self-abnegating attitudes of 'caritas' and 'agape' (see below): the divinely-inspired love which desires nothing for itself, only the well-being of the

beloved. I was much influenced by Bede Griffiths' *The Golden String* (London, 1950). It was easier to follow his prescripts when I was a young man than it is now in my backward running years.

6 When, many years ago now, a newly appointed Housemaster at one of England's best-known (and best) independent schools (Shrewsbury) asked his Headmaster for advice, the Headmaster said "You must love all your boys equally and show them that you do". Once that was settled, the Housemaster said that he would only take on the job if he could outlaw all forms of corporal punishment: the Headmaster agreed. So began a quiet revolution which has turned that school (already one of the first in scholarship) into one of the foremost in the land for its humane attentiveness to its pupils' needs and for the mutual regard and respect that is shown by all the members (staff and boys) of the school for each other.

7 Trilling discusses this notion in *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Oxford, 1972), another influential book. Of Jane Austen, he writes, "she was committed to the ideal of 'intelligent love', according to which the deepest and truest relationship that can exist between human beings is pedagogic. This relationship consists in the giving and receiving of knowledge about right conduct, in the formation of one person's character by another, the acceptance of another's guidance in one's growth" (p. 82). He adds, "The idea of love based in pedagogy may seem quaint to some modern readers and repellant to others, but unquestionably it plays a decisive part in the power and charm of Jane Austen's art". I myself might add that this kind of love must be practised with the greatest restraint: any expression of possessiveness or a desire to control is immediately fatal.

8 Nor can we really ask anyone, certainly not children, to make promises: it imposes our will on theirs and denies them their freedom to make choices when they are old enough to wish to do so.

9 I have just read that many male teachers in Britain today are declining to work in primary schools for fear of being branded paedophiles. Paedo-

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philes, of course, do not love children at all: they only desire to use them as means to their own sexual pleasure — and that is not, in anyone else's understanding, love, certainly not the kind that I am speaking of here — which really must be self-denying.

10 It has been an article of faith in many British schools that if left alone children will be instinctively creative, for should you prescribe any kind of structure, grammatical or logical, you will stultify the child's imagination. Wordsworth knew better: "Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room", he claimed and those who have felt the weight of too much liberty find solace, as he found it, in writing within the sonnet's "scanty plot of ground".

I was once asked to lecture on Ivan Illich, and a surprising number of my colleagues turned up expecting me to support his views. I simply paraphrased his argument without comment, and greatly disappointed my audience, which was hoping for fireworks.

In *The Day-Star of Liberty* [Faber, 1998], Tom Paulin's new book about Hazlitt, Paulin quotes (p.65) Francis Hutcheson's moving passage about the natural curiosity of children. I need to set it against my more pessimistic late 20th Century view.

11 I learned all this from George Rowley's *Ambrogio Lorenzetti* (Princeton University Press, 1958), which I read in 1969 while on a Schoolmaster Studentship at Merton College, Oxford: I have preserved the notes I made then, as well as the pencil drawings of the frescoes.

Almost all that follows was similarly inspired by the books, mostly on neo-platonism or its by-products, which made up my reading at that time. I thought that I should always have these books to hand (and was therefore not as scholarly in my annotations as I ought to have been), but after I came to Japan I had ultimately to dispose of my library and so almost all the books I now need had to be sold. I hugely regret it.

At that time, I owned the three volume translation by Stephen McKenna of *The Enneads* of Plotinus, of which I read every word. I was also influenced by Frances Yates's many books on sixteenth century courtly life and the mnemonic arts, Leo Spitzer on *Stimmung* (*Classical and Christian*

*Ideas of World Harmony*, 1944), and Curt Sachs on the dance and music, Paul Kristeller on Marsilio Ficino and the renaissance in general, Walter J. Ong on *Ramus and the Decay of Dialogue*. From all of them I have taken ideas, since I took notes of them all, but almost always I failed to record who it was that I was taking the notes from: I am therefore not able to acknowledge my sources save in this very general way.

12 These motifs have been constant companions ever since, and they have inspired quite a lot of subsequent verse.

13 Last year, however, my memory let me down, and I made a very bad mistake, since I failed to check either my drawings or my notes. I thought that it was Apollo himself, with his cithara, who presided over the dance — which is what (in fact) I wanted it to be, for the purposes of a sonnet sequence that I was then writing. Yet even our misrememberings can be creative, as I shall suggest in my remarks about Richard Mulcaster: the lady with the tambourine will obviously have taken her rhythmic inspiration from Apollo, although he himself is not there.

14 In its wisdom, the present British government has (so I have read) decided that the teaching of music (and painting) is to be no longer part of the curriculum of elementary schools.

15 It would need another essay to work out exactly where these two tendencies led (and I am not scholarly enough to do so), but, very generally (and tentatively), one might suggest that the classical roots of neoplatonism would branch out into humanism, and that a theology which rejected classicism would, in northern Europe, bring on the Reformation.

16 I read Elyot in an edition published in the Everyman Library (Dent). Most of the background information about Elyot's sources (and about the *Orti Oricellari*) will almost certainly have come from the writings of Paul Kristeller (who wrote many works on Renaissance thought, in particular on the work of Marsilio Ficino).

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17 I read, and was affected by, the entire works of Plotinus in McKenna's translation, at a time when Plotinus was hardly ever referred to (except by my old colleague Frank McEachran): today, I note in the local Maruzen bookshop three new studies about him.

18 The scare quotation marks (I hate the abbreviation 'quote', or 'quotes', often when the appropriate term should be 'remark', anyway) around the word 'relevant' are of course intended to indicate that I think this a damaging as well as a modish demand. As T. S. Eliot said to someone who complained that it was not necessary (or relevant) to read the writers of the past since we know so much more than they did: "Precisely, and they are what we know!" (or words to that effect).

19 Did I mis-transcribe this sentence? If I did not, the second phrase must mean "since, when considering grammar, we must (also) speak of metre and harmony", and one might paraphrase the whole as something like "without music grammar will be imperfect, since good sentences need to observe the rules of metre and harmony, called *rhythmi* in Greek".

20 Only the other day — in a review by Katharine Duncan-Jones of Volume Two of the *Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke* (Philip's sister) (the *TLS*, July 31, 1998) — I found a reference to a passage on cross-dressing in her *Antonius*. Of course, Elyot predates Mary Herbert as well as the Actors' Companies of Shakespeare's time, but obviously cross-dressing must have been common enough even at the beginning of the century to have called forth a rebuke.

21 William Tyndale worked at his translation of the Bible during the 1520s and 30s. Miles Coverdale superintended the publication of the *Great Bible* in 1539. Their work was incorporated in the *King James Bible* of 1611, and their words and rhythms have influenced the English language ever since. That influence is, alas, now fading fast.

22 Both Latin and Greek distinguish between physical love (eros and



amor) and spiritual love (agape and caritas), whereas English does not: this will obviously affect our perception of what love is and how it may express itself. The question is discussed, with great authority, by Anders Nygren in *Agape and Eros* (a study of the Christian idea of love, London, 1932): we are conduits through whom God's love for us (agape or caritas) is converted into the charitable love we feel for our fellow human beings, which is then redirected back to God.

23 *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, Edgar Wind, (Faber and Faber, 1958), a book which I have hung on to not only because of its influence upon my understanding of the Renaissance and its roots, but because Wind was once very generous to me.

24 I recorded this remark in my notes, but failed to note who made it: it was almost certainly Paul Kristeller.

25 As I was going through the final draft of this piece, I picked up in Maruzen a book by the American philosopher Thomas Nagel, *Equality and Partiality* (Oxford, 1991). I did this because I had just read an essay by Nagel about Clinton and Starr in the *TLS* and had been impressed by its detachment (the *TLS*, August 14, 1998). Nagel's book tackles the issue that I have been writing about here and in a couple of other recent pieces (although I do so in a more polemical spirit than Nagel, who is by profession judicious): the problems of balancing the demands and needs of the personal and partial against the equally compelling needs and demands of the impersonal and egalitarian. If we stand outside ourselves we must recognise that all men (and women) are equally deserving of respect and the chances of a decent life, while from within we see ourselves as having our own needs that may often come into conflict with our social obligations towards others. I believe that Mulcaster and Cleland would find Nagel's interests and arguments entirely understandable and pertinent to their own.

26 I also read this book in the Bodleian in 1969: it was a small volume, bound in white leather. And I enjoyed it, as I had enjoyed Mulcaster, for

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its style: its content is a little harsher (and more puritanic) than Mulcaster's, and not as sympathetic, but they are often in agreement about what matters.

27 This sort of claim will be anathema to those who think that children must be educated in mixed ability classes: they would consider the singling out of any child for special treatment as encouraging élitism and would judge it, on egalitarian grounds, to be wholly unacceptable.

28 In 'Among School Children' (stanza VI)  
Plato thought nature but a spume that plays  
Upon a ghostly paradigm of things;  
Solider Aristotile played the taws  
Upon the bottom of a king of kings

*The Tower, 1928*

'a taws' (sing or pl) was a leather strap divided at the end into strips used for punishing relacitrant children.

29 Although Mr Collins (in *Pride and Prejudice*) is much in awe of Lady Catherine de Burgh's condescension (which he praises immoderately), Jane Austen herself is aware, ironically, of the term's slide into a mode of disparagement — or may even, in this instance, have helped to precipitate it — and is less impressed.

30 In some parts of the USA black children are even denied the opportunity to learn the official dialect of their own country, which is after all the language of power, and have to be content with what they are supposed to prefer — or all that they are thought capable of being interested in or of mastering — Ebonics. To a lesser extent, this happens in British schools, too, where children are often condescended to (in the modern sense of the term) by those who, in the name of political correctness, would deprive them of power of any kind and any hope of ever moving into positions where they might have some status of their own. This is a highly tendentious area, of course, and I step into with some trepidation.

31 I am thinking, here, of those who join terrorist organisations and commit acts of terrorism: they all seem blind to the physical and spiritual realities and existences of those whom their terrorist actions obliterate or maim: they act with a blithe (as well as blind) lack of concern for others, the kind of concern that it ought to be one of the aims of wide-ranging education to help all children to feel. It might be countered, and has been, that self-righteous governments who think themselves above the controls of international legislation can behave in this way, too.

32 It needs, finally, to be pointed out that many Japanese schools and teachers are as aware of all these things as I am, and aware, in particular, of the huge damage done to children's motivation, enthusiasm and development by the periodic examinations that they must continually take, especially the one to enter senior high school; in some cases, schools, where they are able to, have taken the matter into their own hands, since the Ministry is, as always, dragging its feet. There seems to be a growing consensus that reforms have to be made, and made along the lines that this essay has laid down as the best way to go forward if the children are to be properly, and appropriately, served.