

DeVane Lecture Discussion, March 29, 2001

AK Good afternoon and welcome. We're here this afternoon with Richard Brodhead, the Dean of Yale College, to discuss the themes raised in his fascinating lecture, "Democracy Goes to School." I thought, Dick, I might begin by asking you to expand a bit on Horace Mann's conception of democratic education. I found the excerpts from his annual reports that you included in the readings extraordinarily interesting and was struck, in particular, by what he has to say about the importance of training, of disciplining students for participation in democratic life by shaping their characters to be properly disposed, which seems, in some ways, like a hopelessly old fashioned idea. But it has received a fair bit of renewed attention and interest in the last ten years or so. What's the current meaning and value of this idea, for us, of the democratic citizen as a person possessed of certain sensibilities into which he or she ought to be educated as a young person growing up?

RB OK. I'm just getting used to this funny phenomenon that, although to the eye we look like two people sitting in easy chairs, merely by speaking we produce these big, booming voices that fill this room. Also, you're not aware of the fact that we are under a glare that must be of the sort used in interrogation sessions. So I will be trying to make these conditions increasingly natural for myself. Let me return to your question. You know what it's like when people as intelligent and articulate as Tony ask a question: it has so many interesting clauses on the way to the punch that you have begun to prepare answers to many of the clauses and so I will give you all of my answers to your question. I guess the first thing I would say is this: my field is American Literature and Cultural History and I've done lots of work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But I'd have to say, I read a lot of people before it occurred to me to read anything by Horace Mann. I think he's a person whose name is generally known to some people because of schools named after him and things like that. But I don't think he forms part of the average reading of the average person, whereas those works are extraordinarily interesting, I think. The reports are actually very, very long and I've only given you very small excerpts from them. I guess, historically, one would want to emphasize that Mann wasn't the only person doing this. Every state had a cadre of people—Connecticut had interesting people, New York did, Michigan did—working on these issues at the same time. He's the best writer of the group and so he's the one one reads.

I made the remark at one point, if you look at the selections I gave you from Jefferson, and then if you look at Mann, you'll notice that there's a very different idea of the way education equips you to live in a democracy. The very curious thing about Jefferson is, you're going to need some education to live in a democracy, but not that much. Three years of schooling would be sufficient for everybody and then, for some talented people, more might be warranted. But I find especially interesting the notion that what you need, in Jefferson, is to know a lot about Greek history, Roman history, European history and American history, and it really does seem as if Jefferson has a kind of—I don't know what to call it—"match and recognize" theory of knowledge. That is to say, something starts to happen in your country and you say, "Oh, oh, that's just what happened in Athens in this period which I have read about, from which I can prognosticate that the republic will soon be on its last legs." So it's quite interesting. You'll notice that Jefferson seems so modern in so many ways, and that he's got a greatly articulated system with all kinds of interrelated parts. There was no such idea in the world at his time. But the notion that you prepare people for democracy by giving them this kind of arsenal, or this

highly ramified knowledge of good and bad episodes of political history that you can use as a kind of litmus test, or matching item, to figure out what's happening in your time; I don't know anyone in the 20<sup>th</sup> century who has suggested that that's the way democratic education would proceed. Mann is closer to us than Jefferson is, by far, I think, and partly because Mann has a psychological theory of education, that education doesn't put knowledge in a subject that stays much the same. Education shapes the shape of the subject, shapes the shape of self worth. Mann is saying a truism, in the report I gave you, when he says that what democratic schooling can do to fit you to be a good republican citizen is to teach you the habits of self government. This is the classic child rearing language of the 1840's and I've worked on it. I can tell you tons about it if you're interested in it. But part of what's interesting there is that it does make you realize, Mann is talking about—as Jefferson was—the coming of a political order where individuals will be under much less coercion and restraint by the state than had been the case heretofore. So how are you going to prevent the anarchic tendencies that are common in history? And part of the answer is, you start training people, very early on, that they can be released from external government because the government has been brought internal. And how are you going to do that? Only through training in early childhood. I find Mann's theory of democratic education interesting because it has so many different parts to it. On the one hand, you need an education that teaches you to be self governing. But, on the other hand, you need to be smart enough to make productive contributions to the economy because his whole theory of democracy is based on a growing economy, which, I think, does make him totally different [from Jefferson].

AK You know, a central feature of Horace Mann's psychological account of democratic education is the notion of common-ness—the schools are common, the experience students have in them is common, and the character traits of self control, self government and the like are to be held and exhibited in common. And as you remarked in your lecture on Tuesday, this is a notion which, for us, today, is under some considerable pressure on account of our acute appreciation of all that's left out, purposefully or otherwise, the more one insists on common-ness and making alike in form and attitude. How important is common-ness to democratic education?

RB I think, for me—I'll look for the faces in this room to register if you share this response—that it is really a surprising thing to see how early somebody writing about democratic education understands that the problem is that the schools have to create a community because it doesn't exist outside the schools, that the schools have to make the experience of living together for the very reason that you can't count on people experiencing themselves in one another that way outside. You and I had a little conversation yesterday: what's probably the greatest issue that poses a threat to a democratic community in American education is that most public schools are locally based and that American life is characterized by very large degrees of social self-segregation in people's residential patterns. This means that when we read these fascinating articles in the *Times* for the last month about the new census, it suggests a very mixed and mixed-up culture but, as you know, there are places where that's what you'd experience in a school, but there are places where you would only get one fraction of that because of the residential patterns of the place. I think you are quite right to remind me that in Mann's idea of democratic education, part of what education trains you for is so that there will never be a time when you didn't know the people who are your fellows. I think the place where Horace Mann's theories have gone in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century tends to be into daycare places. It's learning to get along with people, learning that there are people who aren't you, and learning what they're like

and how to get along with them. Daycare places and colleges. I don't mean those are the only places, but they are two of the venues in which this is sometimes emphasized. We talk about it a lot here.

AK Let me ask one more question and then we'll open it up to our friends beyond the glare.

RB Fascinating, sitting in these chairs.

AK It is a little unnatural. Not much more unnatural than speaking from the pulpit though.

RB Remember the two old men on "The Muppets"?

AK They only had heads, as I recall. Early on in the lecture, you made the point that so much attention has been concentrated on our schools and so many hopes have been reposed in them that they've become a dumping ground for democratic hopefulness. And I was reflecting afterwards on this. And I think you're absolutely right, but wondering why it's so that we've concentrated so much of our energy and our anxiety on our schools and I think, perhaps—and I'm just inviting your reaction to this—part of the explanation is that we are so deeply unequal in so many other areas of life, in the division of wealth to start with, but then also in the distribution of family encouragements, which is correlated with wealth but not perfectly so. All of these things give rise to a world of profound inequality and, of course, we could correct that to some significant degree, passing a law that takes from the rich and gives to the poor, or breaking up families and insisting that people live in communes. But these are unlikely to happen. And so we turn to the schools as the last best practical hope of moderating, softening, balancing, counterbalancing all of the tremendous inequalities of distribution and of fate that exist out there, and that compromise the democratic principle or ambition of equality in various ways.

RB I guess I'd answer that in a variety of ways. It matters when something is founded. As you know, things carry forward traces from their founding moment long after the founding. This country was founded at the moment of the Enlightenment and it seems to me that one of the things it carries forward from that is this great belief in education, that people can be humanized, people can be, to some extent, equalized by means of education, and then, perhaps, one does not sufficiently stop to ask, "Can that really be done entirely through schools?" I tried to point out at the beginning of my lecture, it was no means always true in this country that education was thought of as more or less synonymous with what happens in school. That's a modern feature, to assume that that's where education takes place. It was usually thought to take place in many other locations. I received an interesting confirmation. The beauty of e-mail is, people can tell you what they thought. I tossed off a suggestion the other day in connection with the idea that this country piles missions on schools. What's the secret history of America? Every two days you discover you've got a problem. Americans can't tolerate the existence of a problem so, right away, you've got to come up with a solution to it. One of the troubles that schools have in this country is that they're the solution to so many things. And once they've been designated as the solution, then the problem is solved until you discover that, perhaps, it hasn't been, or until you discover that, perhaps, one institution has been asked to do too many things. I'm the freshman adviser of a Yale freshman from India who took my remark, that maybe one of the reasons that reading and writing didn't always take place so well in American elementary schools is because

that's the least of what they're asked to do. And she comes from a school system in a country totally different, where schools are asked to do schooling. They have a smaller program and, therefore, a tighter focus on that program. I can't say, but you know that there's all kinds of social goods, health goods, psychological goods, and so on, that schools are asked to foster. I tried to suggest yesterday, there's the actual history of schools in our culture. But part of what makes it hard to think about schooling questions is that schooling also plays this very powerful symbolic role in our culture. Schools play a role as a symbol of what's gone wrong. They're a symbol of a cause, of mysterious ailments and failures. But they're also a symbol of the cure. One of the reasons it's very hard to work with problems of education in this country . . . Let me discontinue that sentence and start this new one. When you study the history of education, one of the things that's curious is there have been so many moments in the history of this country when people become possessed of the conviction that the schools used to be pretty good, but now they're pretty bad. Or the schools used to be quite good and now they're really awful. And the rest of American life is suffering as a result of this. I mean, in the 1830s, if in the Horace Mann moment you find this, it isn't because schooling had gotten worse. It's because the level of expectation of schooling had suddenly risen so much that schools that had been perfectly satisfactory before now come to seem like radical failures. It's hard to know. Are the schools at this moment factually worse at doing the work of education, than they were in other generations? The symbolic overlay of using school as a sort of image of other causes makes it harder to know the answer to this than we sometimes pretend. I don't mean to say that we don't know of actual difficulties.

AK Of course, our concern is intensified by the rise of a credentialing society and the tighter correlation of professional employment work and credentials. Well, the microphone is open and I would warmly invite anyone who wishes to put a question to the good Dean or raise an issue, mount an objection, to do so. Otherwise, I'll just go on asking questions myself, which I'm delighted to do.

Q You mentioned a bunch of things that you feel that the schools are being expected to do - too much. Would you give some specific examples of things that schools are expected to do but are not doing and things, if you think there are any, that schools should be doing that they're not expected to?

RB I'm not sure that I can provide the answer to that question in any very helpful detail. I only mean that, if you look at the history of legislation in state legislatures, there's always lots and lots of things. Now there are new requirements for clean air in schools and things like that, or removal of certain kinds of materials. When I was in California last summer, a big issue for California schools was that new norms had been passed that made you have to, in some cases, remove all the carpeting from schools, all the floor coverings from schools, and things like that. Now, that seems trivial and it's not a main purpose that anyone has asked of schools, but when any person in any institution only has a finite amount of attention to devote to things, and the more things that are made to be issues—issues of physical health, issues of the well being of families—it's hard to know where the edge is. The *New York Times* has had very good coverage of educational issues recently, in my judgment, and they've had very interesting articles on people who have been hired to tough, inner-city schools under a new program to bring many more teachers in. And one of the things that makes these articles so interesting is that the

teachers, in a completely honorable way, don't know where their work begins and where it ends. To what extent do you need to try to know the family situation of each student before you can figure out what might be the problem, or what might be the opportunity you're failing to grasp about them as a learner in school. There's a way in which problems that used to be thought of as family problems are now thought of as ones that the school is being asked, to a certain extent, to assume the burden of solving. That's a big burden to solve—the psychological well being of students, the physical health of students. Believe me, I'm not saying I would be personally comfortable in marking down any of these values. But it does seem to me there should be a point that, when you put enough of them together, it's an awful lot to accomplish. Do you have further ideas?

Q I'm just wondering then if you feel that a school shouldn't be dealing with that sort of stuff? Obviously, it's a very large expectation for schools to deal with psychological issues and to deal with the entire lives of . . . for any given teacher to deal with the entire life of a student. But where should that line be drawn?

RB Don't we wish we knew! But in a world where we don't know where to draw it, it comes to always seem quite plausible to ask the school to take on yet some further issue. But there probably are limits to what can be simultaneously shouldered effectively, is all I'm trying to suggest.

Q You just mentioned before the geographical disparities of schooling, even in very multicultural, stratified, larger areas. It reminded me that a book just came out by Richard Kallender of the Century Foundation who suggested that every American should have the right to attend a school where the majority of students are middle class. And he has complicated definitions of how that would work.

RB This is going to be a right?

Q He's saying that the issue shouldn't be the racial make-up of a public school, but it should be the concentration of poverty in a school dooming it to failure. Do you think it's true that, if the majority of students in a school come from poor families, that almost nothing can be done to help the school and that a radical idea of moving students around or having school districts beyond local neighborhoods might make a big difference?

RB Well, you put your finger on a problem that everyone in this room will be aware of which is—I suggested the other day—I'm not totally out of sympathy with some parts of this current legislation that's going on about primary schools. But the notion that, if there are kids in a school who are falling further and further behind, further and further off the pace in their acquisition of the mastery of math and reading in particular, the notion that a harsher regime of measurement and exposure in the schools will cure that, I have my doubts about because we all know that there are many ancillary dimensions of any child's life that make learning easier or that make learning harder. And people point out, it makes a difference whether you're hungry when you go to school or not. And so it does seem to me that, to talk about the question of success or failures of elementary schools without talking about the differences of advantage and disadvantage in the lives of children who come to those schools seems to me to be narrowing the

lens in a way that I find rather unhelpful and likely to lead to not totally satisfactory solutions. Now, the notion that you could solve that problem by some sort of national busing system whereby you figure out . . . I haven't read this book so I'm likely to caricature, but I must say you almost invite me to in your description of it. The notion that you could guarantee that there would be a critical mass of people from the kind of families that give strong support to education . . . The thing about Americans is, Americans like democracy but they don't like social engineering. You know it. All my early manhood was spent in the years of busing to end segregation in this country and I'd have to say, on the one hand, the ugly passions that that released were really quite a revelation to all of us, and second of all, as you know, the work in those districts does not always support the notion that the result was to produce a greater degree of integration, but often a greater degree of moving around to places where you could avoid being in those situations. Everyone is aware of the fact that American residential patterns create great disparities which are then reflected in schools. It may be that what that book suggests would be the solution but, if so, I wouldn't myself open my wallet to place a bet on the notion that that solution is just about to be elected. Would you?

AK It is striking, though, that the Civil Rights movement focused on the school as the institutional locus for the achievements and objectives which, of course, created, in the end, unsolvable dilemmas. But the school was viewed as the crucial pressure point through which reforms of a much wider kind could be . . .

RB And no wonder because, in the days of official segregation, a school was one of the first powerful cultural institutions that made these kinds of differences. The trouble is, it turned out to be possible to do things with busing and schools that didn't change the social reality to the extent people had expected.

Q On Tuesday you talked a little bit about the transition of higher education from being something that very few people . . .

RB I gave a shamefully foreshortened history of this subject.

Q I think that it's interesting that, since junior high schools and high schools are becoming less and less destinations and more stepping stones on the way to higher education, and also what that means for what you need to learn in the high school environment and the way that things are measured through the optional standardized tests like the SATs and the Achievement tests and things like that that you would use as an admissions criteria, and things like the New York State Regents and the comparable tests in Massachusetts and other areas. Some recent studies have looked at the correlation between the test scores on some of these standardized tests and the income of the community—the median family income of the community—and found correlations in some studies that read up to 90%. The question then is, if the higher income families tend to be—even more, to a degree, than people on the whole—sending their children off to higher education, and those testing standards that they are doing well on are becoming the graduation standard, what happens to the process of providing a basic skills education or even beyond a basic skills education in junior high, high school and elementary school, if that's what needs to happen to people who aren't going to go on to higher education?

RB Your question has probably more than one question lurking in it, and so I'll answer part of it, and then you can ask the remainder of the question. When you allude to this business of correlation in large aggregates, between test scores and income and things like that, of course, it puts one's finger on a very sore spot in the whole issue of democracy and education, which is, if you say, "Everyone has an equal opportunity—here is the test. Step right up, take your chances, and on the basis of your raw merit, on you'll go," but then when you look at the outcomes, you discover that, actually, the test is simply reflecting and replicating distinctions of the sort that one didn't have in mind. Meritocracy isn't based on the notion that families with greater wealth ought to have better luck in placing their kids in enviable berths in colleges. But if that's the way that advantage in early life pays off in the testing system, then it's something to think about. Now, I'm ignoring the part about junior high school at the moment, which I recognize is very, very interesting. In the Nicholas Lemann book, probably the single most interesting chapter—and I had never heard this anywhere else—is the one where he discovers that, within the SAT establishment there was a time when somebody—a lower level functionary—invented the idea of another kind of SAT that would be called the MAT. And the point is, it was going to inflate or deflate your score on the test based on the life circumstances of the test taker. So that is to say, if a person from a severely disadvantaged educational background did quite well, that would be remarkable. That would show real qualities of selfhood or triumphing over circumstance, but somebody else might have a score that was 40 points higher than yours but they'd had every known advantage in the world. What made the idea radical was everybody understands systems in which certain scores are inflated or enhanced to try to equalize things, and America has shown some tolerance for that. It has shown no tolerance for programs in which other people's advantages are deflated. You know, it's not money as such that buys people brains. We know that. It has to do with more complicated processes by which it opens worlds of experiences that develop the mind in ways that aren't so fully developed if you don't have this world of experiences. Now, ask me again your question about junior high because I know that's the interesting part.

Q Well, I think junior high notwithstanding, the question that some people are starting to look at very seriously in the light of recent campaign issues and political issues, talking about the increase in the need for accountability in standards, which could obviously come in the form of more standardized tests—state mandated and obviously federally mandated. The question is, what happens when education shifts from trying to provide for all of the different missions that Horace Mann talked about, that Jefferson talked about, and that have been added on since then, and they stop doing that and just rely on driving towards higher test scores which, on the junior high level or the high school level—or even the elementary level this happens, I guess—the question becomes, how do we keep our test scores high enough so that our school looks good, so that we keep our funding, so that we send more kids to college?

RB Yeah, it's very troublesome. My own sense is I personally don't think it will happen that schools drop the rest of the agenda to focus only on the tests, because I think there are many more social pressures than the ones that are very visible at this particular moment. On the other hand, it is troublesome . . . The point of this exercise that's in the bill that might soon be passed is to effect a change in the enablement of students. That's its purpose. And you might say, if you think that's not worth thinking about, what about the fact that, year after year after year, certain schools are allowed to send people forward as if they had finished their schooling, people

who finished ninth grade who don't have a fourth grade education. The notion that we ought to accept that status quo is, I think, a notion that deserves more serious kind of criticism and impatience on the part of our culture. So this is an effort to get some leverage on those things. What I suggested yesterday is that in my experience, the trouble with school is that education takes place day by day, with child after child. But the government can't organize it that way. When I mentioned that there are 15 million people in college, how many people are in elementary school in this country? As they used to say, "Millions and millions of them." And so you have to do things in these big, gross, aggregate plans, and then you have to hope that, somehow, the goals that can only be realized person by person are going to, somehow, be affected by those means. And the trouble is, we all know there's always a lot of slippage. So my view would be, the way to cure that isn't necessarily not to have those tests, but not to think that the tests . . . You know, I said it before. Ours is a culture that loves the idea of a silver bullet, that there's something you could do and that's the cure. We've got a problem and now we've got a cure. You know what? It may be some part of the cure, but it's not the whole of the cure. It's going to take many parts being worked on from many places to solve the problem of unequal education. And it seems to me, if this bill is embraced and enacted in that spirit, it would seem to me, probably, a good thing. If it's embraced in the opposite spirit, it will seem to me, almost certainly, a dud.

Q Along the lines of the different things that schools are asked or expected to do, I was wondering specifically about the inculcation of virtue, moral strength, courage, honesty, diligence and so forth. These have been thought to be very important things to be taught at schools at different points—sometimes not so important. Sometimes technical mastery seems to be all that schools should be really concerned about and the homes are expected to take care of that side of things, although oftentimes they don't and then the schools are asked to. So I was wondering where you think the schools should stand in this sort of role, and also if you believe that schools can effectively generate such virtue in people without some sort of religious foundation?

RB That's a great question, it seems to be, and of course, what you say touches on many things we have already discussed. When we talk about something that could be asked of the schools nowadays, it's to provide the compensatory moral education that has failed to take place elsewhere. And when you hear somebody say, "Our school should teach character," it seems to me, unless you believe that everybody's character, in our culture, is on the whole richly formed, it's hard not to be a little responsive to that, it seems to me. I guess my own experience is, you know, I have some sense of honesty, I have some sense of probity and decency. But I ask myself, "How did I learn these things?" I don't mean to imply that I only have these. I presume everybody in the room does. You don't get instructed . . . You don't learn those things by instruction in them. It's not like the units of trigonometry or something like that in which the virtues will be presented. It's by being placed in an atmosphere where these things are enacted and cared about in a systematic way, it seems to me. Let me give an example that people in this room will resonate to. I have, in my years as Dean (you want to think about education, a great thing to become is a Dean) -- I've been a teacher since the early '70s. But you can be a teacher without thinking about education very much. It's very easy. But it has been my lot, sometimes, to go places where people who graduated . . . You know, there are people in the world who think of me as shamefully young and who regard the Yale of my time as a fallen thing. And

sometimes, such people say, “You know, they used to teach character in my time and now it’s just all academics.” But you know that isn’t true because a school like this puts huge emphasis on moral education but we don’t do it by having classes on the subject. We do it through the residential college system. We do it through the whole notion of residence here, that people need to live together in respect to what you were talking about—live together with people they’re not used to living together with, to learn how to live with each other. That’s moral education. It’s not the only kind. I do think that it’s a perfect example of a very hard thing to ask of a school system. If morality or character isn’t taught outside of school, or before school, then it’s reasonable to ask school to do it because you’re going to pay such a high price if it isn’t learned somewhere. But as soon as school accepts the burden of doing that, first of all, how effectively can school—together with all the other things it’s going to do—perform the work of compensatory training, instilling of the moral sense? I don’t mean it can’t do it, but it’s a lot to ask a school to do without many other kinds of support. And then, of course, one quickly gets into the territory Horace Mann knew all too well which is, when I say “value,” and you say, “value,” we’re both using the same word but that doesn’t mean we share the same values. And so, to the extent that schools get into the business of teaching values which turn out to not be so universal ... the ones you’ve mentioned probably are universal enough, but there are many other values that people want children to learn that it turns out other groups don’t necessarily regard as values in the same way. It’s a place in which different sides of democracy do get brought into focus. And my only view of that is, one shouldn’t underestimate the difficulty of the challenge you’ve just posed.

AK The law school, like every law school, is required by the American Bar Association to teach legal ethics in some form or fashion. And every year we certify to the Bar Association that we do teach it by the atmospheric method.

RB This must be why, when one walks down Wall Street, the atmospherics are so powerful. Let me read you something interesting before you go on. One of the things I learned from the Nicholas Lemann book is that there was a study of admissions policy done at Yale that was never made public, in the middle of the ‘60s. I heard of this for the first time, and since the person who headed the committee is still alive—James Tobin—I called and asked if I could get a copy of this and got it. And I’m probably not going to be able to find the quote here. It’s all based on suspicion of this word “character.” It says that, “The trouble with the old system of admissions is, it talked about putting a lot of emphasis on character but that could, in effect, be used as a kind of code value by which you took the kind of people you just already liked, the kind of people you already admired.” So they urged a considerably greater suspicion of that kind of term. But I’ll have to tell you, as soon as you say, “My school is only in the character business,” the difficulties of that proposition come glaringly before you. But as soon as you say, “We’re going to get out of the character business,” you realize education is about more important things even than learning long division. And so the day school that pretends it’s not about those things, is a day school inviting itself to have either a radically shriveled admission or a very reductive idea of what education itself is.

Q On Tuesday, you spoke about the increasing participation in higher education of Americans, and yet we all read about decreasing voter participation rates at the local and national level. If more and more people are getting more and more education and fewer and fewer people

are voting, how do you reconcile this? Is it the job of the democratic educational system to help prepare people to participate in what's arguably one of the most important duties or rights? And if it's a failure of the educational system, at what level?

RB You know what I probably should say is my honest answer to your question? I believe that, honestly, I may have almost no light to shed on the mystery you've just highlighted. But that's not to say it's not an interesting mystery. It's true that if you chart growth in access to education in this country and amount of education possessed, and if you chart voter participation, they're just about the converses of each other. I would not conclude from that that rising education reduces the desire to vote. The studies usually show that the people who fail or refuse to vote in smaller numbers aren't usually the most educated people. It does seem to me . . . this might get back to the interesting question about education and virtue before . . . clearly, Thomas Jefferson assumed that education would leave every citizen not only equipped to participate but understanding the importance of participation. When you read Jefferson's *Third Revisal*, that use of the word "participation" is really, really interesting. The whole point is your government is not going to be something alien to you. Your government is something you are continually inventing and reshaping. And the "you" in that sentence being every citizen of the place. That's in fact not the way things have worked out in our democracy. Everybody likes to complain about the state but people don't like to participate in the work of shaping it to that extent. Could education now undertake to teach people that they ought to vote? Well, maybe it should. But, you know, many a high school in this country has had classes with names "Civics" where you were taught the importance of things like that. I'll tell you, if you ever look at videotapes of people in Civics classes, they're looking out the window or they're doodling—you know what I mean? What I'm saying is, if you want to teach values, values aren't taught by having a curriculum in Values. That's not the way people learn values, at least in my experience. They have to be taught through the making of something seem urgent and important and I'm not sure that we, at the moment, know how to do that, in schools at least.

AK And I think I would add to this that, for most students, their education, certainly at the college level is very importantly and legitimately centered on themselves. They're not thinking about—at least not first and foremost—not thinking about how to prepare for life as a democratic citizen and responsibilities they will have. Some are, to be sure. And most are intermittently and to varying degrees. But many, many students are thinking, quite legitimately, about how to prepare for the life they think they might want to lead or to figure out what kind of life it is they want to lead, and deepening their capacities for pleasure and enjoyment and observation and gathering the equipment for a profession or whatever. And all of that is, first, personal. It's focused very directly on one's self. And we not only accept this but we encourage it. And it's among the legitimate aims of education—really right all along the way—but certainly at the college and university level. And it stands there right alongside what we might call citizen formation or something like this.

RB In some way. I mean, the readings and the brief history I gave the other day is a history of democratic education, in effect, putting less and less emphasis on political education and more and more emphasis on psychological informing and things like that. The school ends up doing the relatively weak job of making people feel that their political participation is of the essence. That is to say, it may be that that got traded off as other things got made more important. I do

not know the answer to your question and I don't know who does but it's a very interesting one. . . A great mystery of this country is, it prides itself so complacently on its democracy, but the number of people who don't feel any obligation to practice that, the essential operation of that, is astonishingly large. Partly, it has to do with other things we haven't talked about, like the role of media and things like that. Children aren't trained in morality in a void. They're trained in the whole world they live in and so this would be a further part of my question to you (I'm glad I can still see you -- I may be answering your question for the next hour). But people are shaped by all the forces that are around them—family, friends, but, of course, forces of popular culture and media culture are such powerful ones and that has surely something to do with the sense of spectatorial citizenship where lots of people watch the news—more people watch the news than vote. They perform the work of citizen in the spectatorial mode.

Q I have two questions. One, I think it's interesting how you point out it's modern to expect everything from the school. But I wonder if it's just modern in public schools to expect that because I do think that it's quite an old thing in parochial schools to expect that and when you're in class with the nun, down the hall you might have the priest you confessed to yesterday—and they certainly know all about your family. So I just wondered if you thought that maybe has just spread more recently into public schools. And the second thing I wanted to ask you was, I particularly enjoyed reading Lemann's book on the possibility of the death of the SAT, now with President Atkinson of the UC system saying, "No more SATs." But what I wonder, and I've wondered since his announcement, he says he's going to make a new test, what does that mean? Is there a new test that can do it better? When you're having a test for thousands and thousands of people and students are applying to dozens of schools, how can you really have deeper proving test?

RB In quick reply to your first question, I don't mean to imply that all schools used to have tiny programs of education and they've all gotten more complicated. But if you look at the educational programs of parochial schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> century where values and religious education are very important parts of them, but there are still things that the modern school would expect to do in terms of psychological well being, family counseling and things like that that wouldn't typically be part of the program then. Your second question, I gave my answer to the other day. It's easy to be mad at the SAT. Whether the SAT is the thing to be mad at seems to me a much more difficult question to answer and, if one is mad at it, what the thing is that's going to take its place is the greatest mystery of all. The trouble is, if you have millions and millions of people who have to be sorted out somehow, how are you going to do it? You need some kind of abstraction and comparison mechanism. And if it's not that test, it's going to be another test. People in general in colleges have found that aptitude tests predict certain kinds of academic success better than achievement tests do. That's why they were chosen. So if we go back to achievement tests, the notion that those won't have limitations . . . They'll just have different limitations and then everybody will be mad at them. You know what people are mad at? I think that what people are mad at is that everybody wants two things simultaneously. Everybody wants to live in a world where everyone has opportunity. I think people in general take that value very seriously and are crestfallen when they see that that's not a reality. But it's also true that people want themselves and their progeny to be able to succeed in astonishing ways. So that is to say, we want both to have a competition in which no one is disadvantaged and in which everyone we care about is superlatively advantaged. As long as we're trying to

meet those two goals simultaneously, there's going to be a lot of frustration in this system, and the trouble then is, then you begin to look for scapegoats. I believe at the moment—I'm not saying the SAT is a perfect instrument—heaven help me!—but it is certainly being asked to bear a burden of scapegoating at this moment, I believe.

Q I wonder if you see a connection between what you're saying and with Professor Gelernter's lecture when he said that by having the Internet and computers and globalization, which we so celebrate, we have become more shallow. And it almost seems—it's radical, but I wonder if we wouldn't be better off if we had purely localized education because then we'd have so many fewer students applying and you could, perhaps, evaluate them in a deeper way because there would be fewer.

RB Maybe so. You know, this is the week that Yale College does its admissions. We send the letters out on Monday afternoon. We had 14,850 applicants for 1,300 places next year. A couple of years, while I've been Dean, which is not my whole life, we had 11,000 one year. When I applied to Yale College, there were fewer than 5,000 applicants. So that is to say the competition for these places has grown and grown and grown. And that partly has to do with things you touch on. There was a time when most colleges and universities had, for the most part, a regional catchment area where people at Yale . . . You know, you'd have some people from Louisiana or California, but where people, in general, would come from Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, perhaps the hinterlands of Pennsylvania, or something like that. Now, this year, we've extended need-blind aid to international students. What that means is, the catchment area in the world of modern communications has brought us into being is an infinitely expanding one in which any smart young person in the world might plausibly be a candidate at every school. The trouble is, no college is going to expand the number of places in its class to reflect the number of applicants in its pool.

AK And, of course, your point is, the farther you cast the net, the less you are likely to know about the full range of secondary schools.

RB I'll tell you, the business of international admissions . . . It's easy to favor it but it's tricky business because the Admissions Office at a school with a national base can know a lot about a lot of schools and what goes on there and whose word means what. But all of a sudden when you have applicants from, maybe, 110 countries, that's a lot of schools.

Q I'm afraid that I have two totally unconnected questions. I'll ask them separately. First of all, following up on this question of the SATs, you seem to be presenting the problem, I think probably accurately, as largely a conflict between democratic values and academic or meritocratic values—academic standards, academic testing vs. equal accessibility. However, there is another history to this debate which goes back fairly far and so it's, once again, returning to the past. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as I'm sure you're aware, there were a number of critics of testing from an academic standpoint, and there remains ones today. I think, particularly, of Mark Patterson in 19<sup>th</sup> century Oxford, who attacked Oxford's examination system as encouraging a vulgar and utilitarian approach to learning which was inimical to true scholarship. The idea was that, if you're focusing on cramming people for exams, as you can see today, for instance, in parents hiring SAT coaches for their children, you will, in fact, discourage them from treating

learning as an end in itself and from developing a true scholarly approach to it. So can you address that?

RB You probably don't incorrectly characterize what I said about the SATs in terms of a conflict between values of democratic openness and values of meritocratic sorting. But you're quite right and I think, too, that there are more than two forces in conflict here. There are lots of different forces. I tried to make the point the other day that the conflict isn't all between democratic and anti-democratic forces but sometimes it's between one democratic force and another force that you would just equally call democratic. But you touch on something else which is the notion that there might be academic virtues that can be virtues, whether or not they are successfully democratic. Now, I tried to hint at this the other day when I said a sentence—perhaps I'm the only person who remembers every sentence of my talk—but I said a sentence that I was aware was either platitudinous or a bombshell, depending on how one chose to take it, and the sentence was that “universities have other legitimate missions besides democratic missions.” This seems to me a fact one has to face, and Yale Admissions is not an exercise in democracy. It's not altogether not an exercise in democracy. But it's an exercise in that, modulated together with many other values, and part of them have to do with serving values that are more strictly academic. You know, this school turns down, every year, many, many people with 1600 SATs but that's because we never regarded the SATs as the mark of intelligence. That's the mark of a kind of intelligence. But we want to find that in the company of other kinds of intelligence—the intelligence that's exhibited by just simply having the capacity to wonder about something, the capacity to be asked a question and say, “That's an interesting question,” and then try to figure out what the nature of the question itself is, rather than just being able to fill in the bubble that's the correct answer to it. After all, I'm not saying that every kind of intelligence is valued in a university, but many more than the kind of mere mental adeptness that's tested on certain tests is in question. It's a tricky thing. I've thought a lot about this issue. When you think about college admissions, one of the things that's rather hard to explain in public is that you could be thinking about it in so many different ways, all of which have some legitimacy. To what extent is college admission a reward for good conduct in high school? To some extent it is because you wouldn't admit people wholly without regard to whether they did well in high school. That would be bizarre. On the other hand, that's not all of it because schools that just say to people, “OK, we're going to take everybody who applied and we're going to devise a graph and we'll chart your grade point average and we'll chart your SATs and everybody who falls in one quadrant, we'll admit” -- you don't get interesting students by that way of admitting people, only on the basis of abstract evaluation of academic achievement in high school. You've got to go for other traits or you're not going to get people who are important in another way—the people who will be interesting while they're in your school, the people who will make a good use of your school, who will engage with it and take it somewhere further. But I'd have to say it also isn't clear to me that colleges can only care about the values that will show themselves while a student is in the school. Also you have to think about the later life of people, you know, to some extent, it seems to me.

AK Let me sharpen the tension a little bit though. It's not just that schools have internal interests and ambitions of their own which are different from those of the larger democratic society, which they're perfectly entitled to promote in whatever ways they wish, including through the admission of students that have something to contribute to those internal purposes.

But some of those purposes, at least, seem to be in rather sharp tension with the larger democratic values of the encompassing society. For example, in the natural sciences at least—maybe in some other departments of inquiry—the ideal of truth, the pursuit of truth, the discovery of truth, recording new ones and so on—is a very live and plausible idea and it really doesn't matter how people vote or whether a majority is in favor of it. It's just the truth. That's all. And people who are addicted to the truth and to the pursuit of the truth are well suited to this enterprise and drawn to universities and universities to them. But it ill prepares them for the give and take and the reciprocities of democratic life, to be so addicted to the truth. So there is actually some friction here between what the discipline and the school that supports the discipline requires and what the democracy needs. I'm looking for the bombshell.

RB You're the Dean of a professional school and I'm the Dean of an undergraduate school and, of course, these enterprises tend to have different schemes of value in question, right? It seems to me, an undergraduate school is likely to want to be training many sides of the self at once, and therefore training people for many possible extensions of their powers or abilities in later life. So let me try to understand what you're saying. You're saying that, at least in those places that adhere to an idea of inquiry with objectified results . . .

AK Physics—not English and not Law.

RB Since I'm not positive I understand your question, I'll pivot to an apparently related answer. My information is that the response of faculties in the University of California system to President Atkinson's idea that they should toss out the SATs, is that it has met with some favor and has met with much disfavor and has met with much puzzlement about what to think. But I'm told that a lot of the disfavor of it comes from people in the hard sciences who fear that it's all very well to toss out these tests, but if you're going to give us students who really can't do the math that's going to enable them to do higher level physics, then we're not going to have students who can understand this stuff and who can help us carry it the next level. That would be an obvious way in which one academic value comes into conflict with other values that, themselves, may be academic in a different sense of the word.

Q I noted in your lecture on Tuesday—or thought I noted—the, to me, welcome spirit behind it of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin, with his talk about conflicts among values, irreconcilable conflicts. So I turned to Berlin's essay on General Education—one of his better known ones—to see what he had to say about the matter.

RB You're a model pupil.

Q Well, I'm also a model Isaiah Berlin obsessive, but that's a different story. Berlin, in his essay, talks about the challenge of education as preparing students for democratic citizenship in the modern world but he notes a problem which is that, as the modern world has gotten increasingly complicated, education has become increasingly specialized to deal with these complications. So that to even begin to understand the various disciplines within education requires increased sophistication. However, this presents a great difficulty for democratic education since students can't know so much about everything and yet education, if it's

democratic, is aiming to give them a certain amount of knowledge about everything so that they can deal with the world. So if you could, perhaps, say something about this whole problem of . .

RB Your observation is more interesting than any response I could make to it, which is, you're putting your finger on the fact that the world we live in has certain characteristics and is evolving in certain directions, and they make certain problems truly difficult. What has happened to knowledge in our time is that amazing things are known and knowable, but they're known by means of an act of specialization, but not only . . . You have to know an awful lot about something to reach the point where you can make the next step of discovery. Now, we all know that knowing an awful lot requires considerable narrowing at some other point. To know that much about something, you have to not know as much as you could have about lots of other subjects and that's just a fact. We're not going to cure that by wishing it away. You'd wish away the discoveries of modern biotechnology and all kinds of other things in the process. It seems to me that all you could ask is that that specialization be compensated for by some other principle, by things that pull people back in the other direction. Now, in truth, it's not necessary for democratic citizenship for a person to have expertise in electrical engineering and macroeconomics and legal theory. In truth, one could be quite an effective democratic citizen without . . . That's not the threshold for entry into democratic citizenship, it seems to me. But there are some things that probably are thresholds for entry into it, it seems to me, and one of them would be a sense of the rights of others, a sense that the whole has an obligation to protect the rights of its many constituents. Now, you're not going to learn that in a lab. That doesn't mean you can't learn it somewhere else. It means that it becomes more and more incumbent on the system to teach the thing you're not learning one place, if you're not learning it there, in some other place. It's not a great answer, but my point is the problem can't be made artificially simple because one dislikes its difficulty. You have to work with the things that are the future's . . .

AK Maybe another way of putting the point would be to say that in our democratic civilization expertise, the expert management of systems and organizations of life plays an increasingly large role and part of the equipment for democratic citizenship is an appreciation of the proper limits of expertise itself, which is not itself an expertise but something else, a part of a general . . .

RB If we had all day, we still wouldn't get into the difficulties of this because everybody knows that expertise creates hierarchies in our society. The layman's opinion about health does not count the same as the opinion of the trained and certified specialist. And so there's a way in which these developments in the organization of knowledge have created profoundly undemocratic developments in our culture that go back a fair distance—certainly to the beginning of this century.

Q When I've studied Ethics, I found some utility in thinking about . . . You think about some bad thing that happened—say, there's a murder—and to ask when exactly the bad thing happened—with the forming of the intention to do it, with the action which caused the killing, with the actual dead body. That actually has some utility, or at least it has for me, in thinking about ethics, or in thinking about history. When exactly did this war become inevitable, which was always Donald Kagan's question with the Peloponnesian War and he taught me to ask it. So

I started thinking about education that way and saying, “Well, something good happens when we become educated. When exactly does it happen?” If you think of the narrative of a school day. A student wakes up and I guess there’s a certain discipline in that—there is for me. You go to school, you begin class, you immediately start socializing with the other students, and you have to behave yourself and you learn something. There are these moments of apprehension where you comprehend whatever the subject matter is. Of course, there are those times after school where you apply those moments of apprehension or whatever you learned to voting or whatever public thing it is that you’re engaged in. For myself, I’ve been tempted to think the good thing that happened, it happened exactly when that moment of apprehension happened. But I’d like to know what your answer is.

RB Maybe so. I don’t know. You’re a philosopher and I’m a literary type. And I suppose that my answer will reflect that difference which is, my own sense is, if one reflects on one’s own experience, you realize that the processes of education are profoundly mysterious. We’ve been to school but think how many things we learned at school that are no longer part of our consciousness. And think of the powerful parts of our consciousness that you really can’t trace to the moment when that came to you. You learn something and, OK, I read *King Lear* when I was in college. I wrote papers on it. But I didn’t understand a thing about it. And at some later point, you read it again and, all of a sudden, instead of the textual puzzle of it, you have some sense of what the pathos or suffering or human experience of this is all about. I have the experience every day—maybe it shows only my advancing age—but some subject comes up and you realize you have all kinds of thoughts about it that you’ve never had before, that you’ve never been aware of having. You never were aware of the moment when you acquired those thoughts. So I don’t think that education can all be traced to moments of apprehension because my sense is that apprehension takes place through a thousand mysterious processes—some of them conscious and datable, but many of them unconscious and undatable. Again, in a way, the question I keep going back to is the question of values education because, of course, there can be a moment when you have a flood of recognition that this conduct which I thought was just technically disfavored actually turns out to have a human meaning I didn’t grasp before, of dishonor or violation or something of that sort. There can be such moments. But there are other things that one has a very strong sense of. It would be very hard to trace it to where that sense came from. I have to say it’s the interactive agency of all the parts of our experience that are our education, if the truth were told.

Q So if I was to try to simplify the answer—just condense it into one phrase or one sentence—you might say that it’s mysterious when or where exactly the good thing in education takes hold.

RB I learned this phrase from Goethe: *Alles grosse bildet*. Every great thing teaches. How many great things are there in the world? A lot of them.

Q Is that your answer, too, Dean Kronman?

AK Well, it is mysterious but it’s not so completely mysterious that we don’t have a moderate degree of confidence in our ability to frame programs of education and instruction. We think that we know what we’re doing in ordering the way in which and the level at which a subject is

approached and, sure, we're fumbling around in the dark to some degree but not completely so. I also think it is true . . .

RB Oh, I wouldn't say . . . My answer was not quite so agnostic about formal education as it might have sounded. But for all that, we know that formal education has goals that are realized by other means than the strict discharge of the formal education.

AK I think it's not only that the beginnings of discovery or perception or enjoyment are hard to pin down, hard to identify—to say, “Well, it all began last Tuesday at three in the afternoon”—but the consequences of it are awfully hard to measure, too, and sometimes it's not until the end of the day—and I don't mean that metaphorically—until you can say, “This is what my learning meant to me in the life that I've lived.”

RB One thing one does have to admit is, you can devise a system of education and put people through it. You can't guarantee that they come out of it the people you wanted them to be by having gone through that. Some become it by the process. Some become it by that and other processes. Some become it in ways that are rather disappointing. Some people seem not to take it at all. It's not a reason not to try it. You're giving up on me, aren't you?

Q Dean Brodhead, earlier you spoke about the attention that an institution—the limited amount of attention an institution has to focus on different areas of its activities. I wonder what you think of this observation: The primary school and the college seem to have traded their attentional focuses and I'm wondering whether that might be a sort of misallocation of attention in that now, the current state of affairs is that, when a child is young and living at home with their parents, the primary school is becoming more focused on getting involved in family problems, psychological problems, health problems, all the sorts of things that might have traditionally been taken care of, as you pointed out, in the home. But then, when the child moves away from their parents, and now that they're older and probably have a longer attention span, hopefully, and are more capable of being independently diligent about their studies, the college seems primarily focused on the studies and not so much, I think, on what was traditionally called, I guess, the *in loco parentis* role of a college faculty. So what do you think about that?

RB It's a very interesting suggestion and I would wish to think about it a good deal longer than I'll have time to now before I'd give an adequate answer. I guess you'd say that one of the points of somebody who would defend that difference would be on the idea that people are at different levels of maturity when they're in elementary school, and the whole point is, you teach people to be independent and the day comes when you're able to recognize their independence more than you were before. That said, it's an interesting question and, of course, there are certain things that no university would dare do *in loco parentis*, certain kinds of warm parental pressure, a university would not be welcome to apply to its students. But I'll tell you, the notion that any university doesn't spend a lot of time thinking about the well being of its students in larger degree than whether they've met their formal academic requirements, that's not all a university can be about. You raise an interesting question which is whether, in future, universities will have to assume more of that kind of moral and psychological service. If, indeed, it is not successfully done at some earlier stage, you can't count on it being done, and so then it will fall to later states of schooling to take up that burden. This seems to me possible. A

very interesting question, as you read all of these debates nowadays is: how much schooling might people eventually get? When I look at these figures, it's very, very interesting to see how many more years the average youth spends in school now than they did 50 years ago or 100 years ago. When you study the 19<sup>th</sup> century, you never find anything controversial about colleges. Colleges are just way off on the edge somewhere. They're just not part of the world of common experience and common problems. That's not true now. But of course, the number of people who not only go to college but even go beyond it. . . But there may come a day when a professional school is not a terminal educational destination either. Given the hallucination of the last 100 years, it would be possible to prophecy that there will be a time when education might extend through the mid-30s, for instance. And I don't think this is a totally far fetched suggestion. If a person had suggested in 1900 that college would now typically go for 8 years beyond elementary school, that would have been regarded as outlandish. Curious developments—and the interesting thing is they don't always take place with lots of discussion. They happen and then people cope with the consequences.

AK We think of college as something that happens in a place and for a time and, among other forces which are relaxing those boundaries, the new technologies make it possible to continue on forever and continue on anywhere. But there are some temporal boundaries that we must still respect and one of them is 5:17. We're out of time today. Thank you all for coming and, Dick Brodhead, thank you.