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1960-09
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https://hdl.handle.net/10539/24262
Langeveld, M.J. (1960, September). Educational responsibility. Symposium: A Journal for Education in Southern Africa, pp. 43-44; 74.

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Educational Responsibility

Some remarks by M. J. LANGEVELD (Utrecht, Holland)

SOCIALLY, economically, politically and in respects also psychologically there is hardly a place in this world where continuity and peace are reigning. We need not describe the situation of threatening earthquake, of tremendous forces blindly at work or forces unchained by humanity but still kept under a certain control.

What could happen to education under such circumstances? For the older generation it means a rapid shift from traditional forms, from customs, values and convictions with which it learned to identify itself in its own time to the quicksand of a disintegrating world in which decisions have to be taken every moment anew and on scarce evidence of the upshot. Suddenly too much is left to the personal responsibility or inventivity of too many people who are just ordinary people (like you and me). And this responsibility and inventivity are engaged in the field not of things but of man himself. The intricacy of all occupations with the human being is not only of a purely intellectual kind but it is also the consequence of the fact that human dignity and values compatible with it are involved in many decisions.

It is evident that on the one hand we must further the moral responsibility of the individual as much as we can, while at the same time it is evident on the other hand, that this *is* an extremely difficult task for an individual. Education and the moral structure of the society in which this individual lives or is to live are of the utmost importance in giving him guidance, support and enlightenment.

There is an evident contradiction between personal responsibility and the social guidance in this matter. In any authoritarian society this problem is solved too easily and at the price of the personal moral responsibility of its citizens. A so-called "democratic" state, however, is based on the idea of the importance of the personal responsibility of each citizen. Such a state knows or should know that difference of opinion will often spring from a difference in what a person can accept as his joint-responsibility with other citizens. Such a state is fundamentally willing to respect personal freedom of conscience and a life according to it. But . . . in such a state there will develop tensions between individuals or groups and between citizens and the accepted rules of the community. If in such a state social changes are taking place at a great speed, if changes in mentality take place, the fact will "show" much more than in any authoritarian state, that the older generation's task in leading and educating a younger one is complicated to such an extent that many educators fail entirely. The traditional approaches have lost the inner support and, consequently, the glamour of an indisputable authority.

Three ways of dealing with this difficulty are quite natural: dully or spasmodically the traditional ways are defended, — everything is thrown to the wind, — and thirdly, the endeavour to help the younger generation to discover what is of essential value and to help it find its own way of re-incarnating it. It needs no comment that the last way is hardest and for many educators or communities an unrealisable dream.

In brief now: is it surprising that we find a younger generation in our times which is uncertain about itself and what it should do with its life in this world? Is it surprising that we see different ways of "free-wheeling": just enjoying oneself, just doing what one likes, just taking advantage where one sees it, just exploiting any situation?

Is it "criminal", is it "marginal", is it just "wicked", is it "stupid"? What shall we call it? It is still more important however to answer a different question: what can we do? Some people say: this is all the result of falling away from Christianity. If that is so, there are two things to consider: why did they fall away from it? is this "their fault"? "their fault only"? and: if it takes a long time to bring them back to Christ or if they do not come back at all, is there no task for us in the meantime? Can we simply leave them alone?

Now, if there is an "educational vacuum", it is not wise to say "hit them into proper shape", nor would it be so if one said "self-education is what they need!" We cannot let things simply go, and though we have to be serious, even at times severe, we cannot shift the responsibility on to those for whom we have or had the educational

responsibility. Yet, it is not true either that "these youngsters" have no responsibility at all. Growing up in this world means to enter upon ever new responsibilities, whether one likes it or not. Still: *we* are the responsible generation as we are the ones who keep the world going in the first place.

Suspended in the medium of our social life are many youngsters for whom we have to care particularly, because they are losing or have lost already contact with an understanding of human life and this world which helps them to become what they were destined to be. For some of us this is a question of religion, for others it is a matter of philosophy, for still other people it is a question of fairness to young people who still have a chance.

Now what feels a nation in this matter? Is the first a word of accusation, the second one of reproach and the last one of rebuke? It is hardly probable. A nation will develop a number of services in order to cope first of all with the needs of the day. Many of these services will bear a character of immediate rebuff and repression. Then the nation will find means of prevention and aftercare. This means: things are going to take time. In a community in which there is a socially lower group which is at the same time different as a race — as is the case in South Africa — to sink down in social life has the double meaning of this sinking process and of coming near a borderline on the other side of which we are in a different world: the sunken White man assumes the way of life of the Black. Even among them he will be the *sunken* White man.

Foreigners, as I am, who live in an all-White country must realise that the process of sinking down is a much more dramatic one than it is already in their own country, where the sunken White man has sunk between the White and has not trespassed into another world altogether.

The energy with which this problem should be tackled in South Africa must be great and it is evident for a visitor of the country that here lies one of the country's greatest efforts. Needless to say that the inner-national migration of the Bantu is of considerable importance in this matter. Also the large percentage of Coloured people in any town of importance; people with their own ways of life, with a non-committal relation to the White world and its ideas; people who are perhaps not setting a standard for other peoples' behaviour but whose world is nevertheless open to observation by young people, etc. — all this is also contributing to creating a tremendous social-educational problem. Finally, the fact that there is a group of people — the Bantu—who do a certain amount of work which has gradually become "no White man's job", plays an important role in this matter. In an "all White country" other influences take partly the place of those I mentioned a moment ago. They will often be noticeable in South Africa as well. So, for example, the increasing wealth of the population and the hunger, if not greediness, for objects and ways of life, which are taken to give evidence of status. The strong craving for being amused, being looked after. Briefly: the development into the direction of an ever more collectivistic state of life. What we try to do in Holland — as, no doubt, in other countries — is first of all the immediate care for excessive cases; then there are the numerous forms of youth clubs; the activities to give support to the family and to family-life; the control on the "amusement industry", e.g. by strict supervision of all films to be produced, from the point of view of their educational acceptability; the creation in the factories of "schools for life" for young factory workers of both sexes, etc. Yet — there are in Holland more than 2.5 million young people in the age of 12 to 25 years. Needless to say that numerous other activities, apart from the normal educational amenities, are at work. Still if the family as the basic nucleus of education would not be functioning more or less adequately, our number of neglected, marginal and criminal youth would be tremendous. A nation which is aware of this key-position of the family will always have to start its educational action with a direct support of the family. It is only fair to say that in many respects this is the case in Holland but also that it is not always sufficiently effective or gives rise to complicated transactions, a kind of "particularism" on the side of agencies which are or consider themselves as representatives of the family and its interests, etc. Nevertheless: the more the family remains active in educational matters, the less we are on our way to a state which takes over what is essentially not the state's task. The more the agencies responsible for educational activities take their origin in private initiative the better the state will be protected against a gradual development into a purely authoritarian position. On the other hand: it is evident then that the state should give support to these private initiatives, that the state

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THE CRISIS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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conformers of the world, and this diversity in unity is a heritage we must not lightly cast aside, least of all in religion. There is no desire for all to get into one kraal or laager — it's so dull, besides being fatal to man's search for truth.

Jt is fashionable to attack Christian National Education in a negative way — they shouldn't do this, and they shouldn't say that. Mere diagnosis of an illness does not automatically bring about a cure. Wherever possible, there must be positive treatment. We say we know what is wrong with C.N.E. It is possible that we can take preventive measures — isolate ourselves, or gargle meaninglessly with words. This may serve our own ends, but what about the children in our care? Surely they are worth some positive effort? Or do we feel that if we all thought the same way, then wrong would obviously be right, and we could live happily ever after? That, at any rate, is how the political arm of C.N.E. thinks. It is hardly likely that the English-speaking teacher will bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image, however sweet the music of the sackbut and psaltery. The danger is there all the same.

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should help to co-ordinate and prevent unnecessary duplication, that the state should act in full publicity in these matters, etc. It is, however, also true that private initiative may fall short of its task, that the state will have to take over where stimulation fails to elicit a satisfactory result, that the state has a right to know what is done with subventions, how it is done and to what extent the general interest has been served.

A nation in so intricate a situation as the South African knows this. Yet we must help to develop an all pervading sense of educational responsibility in all its citizens as individuals, as citizens of their country and as representatives of Western culture. Just like charity, education begins at home and educational responsibility begins with those who produced the child. There is no apology for parents — and for those who are loyal to them — to confine their educational responsibility to the home (or: the school). Educational responsibility *begins* at home but then it appears to be one of the most fundamental responsibilities of the citizen as a member of a community which finally embraces a whole world.

EDUCATION AND A CENTRALIZATION POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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cation. Grants to cover at least 60%—70% of total expenditure would come from a properly-constituted central government. Each region would raise the rest of the money by taxation, but an equalisation formula would ensure that less privileged areas would not suffer.

Under this system, as is the case in England today, a number of National Advisory Councils could be established e.g. for "The Training of Teachers" and "Technical Education and Industry" and so on.

There is a need for reform in the organisation and administration of education in South Africa. Rather, however, than have unacceptable ideas and patterns of organisation foisted upon the country, it is obvious that those who fear further domination through education will cling to what they already have and will resist any change. It is clear, therefore, that the present is not the time to attempt any such change which can only result in deeper division than is unfortunately the case.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE MORAL QUANDARY OF 1960 AFRICA

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may be accomplished sooner than the pessimist might imagine. The second disaster that has fallen on Africa is the state of neurosis into which people of all races have been led. This shows itself in an inability to choose: somewhat like the induced neurosis that modern Conditioning has produced in dogs. Indeed, the formula that neurosis was basically an inability to make a choice could hardly be gainsaid by any modern psychologist. Presented with pairs of alternatives both of which are disagreeable, the ordinary person abstains from choice and produces ultimately a conflict of indecision that can only be seen at a community level as a massive maladjustment. The tragedy lies in the fact that the choices are really manifold, and that the two offered seldom operate at an immediate and functional level at all.

This whole problem would make the theme for a national or even international conference of educationists, a departure that might well mark the beginning of new adjustments throughout African society. To the intelligent person of whole mind, Africa offers unlimited opportunities.