

In rereading Maurice's *Subscription No Bondage*, I've been struck, as I haven't been before, by the close convergence not only between his understanding of education and my own, but also between it and—by implication, at least—what seems to be H. R. Niebuhr's understanding.

This convergence is no doubt most striking when Maurice says that “all knowledge” begins in “implicit faith” and argues that “in order to educate a people,” one must lead them on from “that implicit faith, in which all knowledge begins, to that actual faith, which alone is knowledge” (6). A few pages later, it becomes clear that, on his use, very much as on Niebuhr's, “implicit faith” may be distinguished not only from “actual faith,” but also from “explicit rational faith”—the latter two terms being synonymous (20). Aside from the clarity with which “all knowledge” is here said to begin in “implicit faith,” and “knowledge” itself or as such is understood to be “actual faith,” or “explicit rational faith,” which is to say, “belief,” Maurice would evidently agree with Niebuhr in distinguishing different kinds of faith/belief/knowledge, even if he is not as systematic as Niebuhr was, or could be, in explicitly differentiating the principal kinds. This is evident, I say, from the statement of his belief that “there are three objects of ordinary human interest, GOD, MAN, NATURE; and that our education is not universal, if there is not a distinct branch of study corresponding to each of these objects” (24). It is also evident from what he says about theology—that it is “a science” which, because it “manifestly concerns Humanity as such, and in which it [*sc.* Humanity] discovers its own foundation and laws,” is “the groundwork of Humanity and of all studies concerning Humanity” (56, 58)—and about “the knowledge of God”—that it is “the highest and deepest knowledge which men can enjoy, the sum of all knowledge, that in which alone knowledge finds its full and satisfactory meaning” (88).

Some passages particularly relevant to Maurice's understanding of education:

“[*Our Reformers*] thought, that, in order to educate a people, in order to lead them on from that implicit faith, in which all knowledge begins, to that actual faith, which alone is knowledge, you must not address yourself to that judging faculty, which is granted in various measures, and to some scarcely at all, but to that heart and conscience,

which are the common inheritance of all: and this, even for the sake of that faculty, and that it may receive the highest cultivation of which it is capable. Here then was another point in which they differed from the continental Reformers. To confute adversaries, was the great vocation of the one; to educate the people, of the other" (6 f.).

"The people were to be educated; but who should educate them? The people were to be delivered from superstitions; who were to deliver them? First, the Ministers of the people; these they [*sc.* our Reformers] believed were the commissioned educators, liberators of mankind. Secondly, in cooperation with these, professional men and the higher class, generally. But how are they to be fitted for their task? What certainty have we that they will escape the infection of the disease which they are to cure? *Quis custodiet ipsos Custodes?* . . . How likely is it that they who are to set men free from the iron chains of the world, will come forth themselves bound hand and foot with the cobweb fetters of the schools! This danger must be provided against, and the Reformers drew up these [Thirty-nine] Articles as a provision against it. The remedy may have been clumsy, ineffectual, worse than the disease; that is not the point about which I am now contending. I am merely concerned to maintain that this was their object. . . . But if this were the intention of the Reformers, then it will follow, that these Articles were not first devised for some ecclesiastical purpose, and afterwards introduced into the Universities in order to further that purpose; but that they were primarily intended for instruments of education, and were adopted by the University, because it was a body instituted to educate young men, and for no other reason whatever" (7 f.).

"[W]hat are the objects of University education, as distinguished from other education[?]

"*Facts* are communicated to the *child*. He is told, for instance, that the Earth goes round the Sun; and, after having received this information upon the authority of his parent, he is led by various gradual processes into the apprehension of what it means. *Laws* are communicated to the *boy*; he is apprized, for instance, of the law of gravitation, and to this he is taught to refer the fact so contrary to sense and experience, which has been announced to him in his childhood and had by degrees become part of his actual faith. Here the education of most men closes. Happy, if they have been under the guidance of those, whom they could, in the first instance, trust implicitly, and who, secondly, were anxious for nothing so much as to convert their implicit faith into an explicit rational faith. But for some is reserved a third stage of education. They are to be professional students. They are to know not only facts and laws, but to understand the processes of mind through which various facts and laws have been evolved; they are to pass, as it were, into the position of the first discoverers of these facts or laws, and to go with them into the cells and avenues of thought, out of which, and through which, they have worked their way into light and clearness. The professional student is not only to know that the earth goes round the sun, and to refer this, and all similar and subordinate facts, to the law of gravitation, but he is to read the *Principia*. These men in truth know no more than their brethren, but they are the stewards and watchers of all that is known, and the guides to what is yet unknown; and they are fit to be so, because they make themselves acquainted with the different obstructions arising from the darkness of the human mind, to the discovery of truth, or to the retention of it. . . .

“The child and the boy have facts and laws communicated to them, but the conditions of the understanding itself, the laws under which it must act, in order that it may act freely, these are not communicated to either of them, for they do not belong to their stage of growth. But when the young man is entering upon a course of professional study; when he is becoming, for the first time, strictly speaking, a student, seeking truth for himself, though not alone or without guides; is it fair, is it just, to keep from him the knowledge of these conditions? Is it not right, is it not honouring his advancing manhood, to take it for granted, that he now understands whereabouts he is, that he appreciates and yet contemplates with becoming awe the noble position of being himself now admitted to the privilege of a thinking rational creature, and that he has learned by experience of the strifes and waywardness of boyhood, how inevitably he must forego all these privileges, and sink back into the condition of a beast and a slave, unless he will submit every portion of his mind as well as of his character to the guidance of reasonable laws? . . . If there be no desire of knowledge, no feeling of being a student, none of the dispositions which may be wrought up gradually into this feeling, I know not how instruction is possible; but if there be these feelings, then I contend, that the student has a right to require from his teachers that he shall not be left in the dark respecting the laws and conditions of study any more than about the mere facts of it. He has a right to require, that the conditions of thought in his teacher’s mind should be set before him, and that he should not be left to get at them hereafter by laborious inference” (20 ff.).

“I believe that there are three objects of ordinary human interest, GOD, MAN, NATURE; and that our education is not universal, if there is not a distinct branch of study corresponding to each of these objects” (24).

“[Æschylus and Sophocles] awaken me to doubts, anxieties, self-questionings. Thanks be to them for it, or rather thanks be to Him, who by such means, or by any means, will rouse up his creatures, his children, from the stupid slumbers of sense and selfishness, to ask what they are, and what He is. But such doubts, such questions, are not like those of the professional sceptic, doubts, for doubting sake; they are doubts which demand satisfaction, and which know that they have a right to it” (31).

“It requires no great liveliness of apprehension to discover, that religion may be used to serve the purposes of interested statesmen, or even that a system of religion is necessary to keep up good order and government. Either of them is the ordinary conclusion of the most careless and heartless reader of history; but they, who are weary of schemes, weary of systems, anxious to understand facts, to understand themselves, are busy with a different problem; they are asking themselves, what is a nation, how does it consist, by what is it upheld? They know it has a foundation deeper than the crude theories of sophists, or the omnipotent decrees of the Houses of Parliament. They know that legislators can lay no foundation, can erect no constitution; all they can do is, to learn what the foundation, what the constitution is; and having that learning, to take such measures as shall uphold it, or destroy it. To gain this learning is the object of history” (36 f.).

“[E]ducation is from first to last a conflict with that notion of sensible utility, which is the natural notion of all men; which every savage holds of course, and which is reproduced as a refined novelty whenever civilization, advancing in a torturous direction, touches at its extreme point the confines of barbarism. Practically to impress this fact upon the minds of students—to shew that, while the whole vocation of a University teacher is to overturn the doctrine that the worth of any thing is to be determined by its direct sensible advantages, he is yet no mere *littérateur*—that every thing he does is done with a view to an end—we must offer some sign, that our *Literæ Humaniores* are indeed what their name imports; that we prosecute each and all of them, as means to a knowledge of ourselves and of man; as means to the formation of a manly character. Now, . . . we can only do [this] by imposing the conditions of a science which manifestly concerns Humanity as such, and in which it discovers its own foundation and laws. And that this science is Theology, is no exclusively Christian doctrine” (56).

“[C]onditions of thought are intended to be used as guides in our studies. . . . [T]hese conditions of thought are intended to mark out the end for which our studies are to be pursued; the attainment of truth, and the cultivation of a large and catholic Humanity” (73).

“[Conditions of thought supply the want in student minds] of some directing authority, not to supersede indeed (for what words or letters can supersede?) the living voice of experienced friends, or the more awful teachings of the voice within, but yet stamped with a reverend majesty, of which the thousand vulgarities of life partly deprive the former, and which passion and restlessness hinder us from recognizing in the other” (78).

“[F]reedom of the spirit, which is the thing most necessary to man,—the free exercise of the reason, and, subordinately to it, of every faculty and affection which has been given to man,—is another thing altogether from that which is so often mistaken for it, freedom of speculation. I do not mean that the latter, so far as it implies the absence of legislative fetters, is not closely connected with the former; but I mean, that when a man indulges his intellect to all the freaks to which it is inclined, he is not in the way to be a freeman, but he is in the way to become a slave. I do not confine my remark to the imagination. I know that it wants restraints and laws, and many severe restraints and laws, in order to its manly exercise; but so also does the hard, dry intellect, nor will it ever do the work for which it was given, and for which we need it, unless it has learnt to endure government” (80).

“[I]t is sometimes said, both by the friends and the enemies of the German nation, that they pursue knowledge for knowledge sake, that this is their virtue or their infirmity. Now I cannot perceive, that pursuing knowledge for knowledge sake, if by knowledge is meant *truth*, the object of knowledge, can ever be a charge against any one. But what I complain of in the Germans is, that the pleasure of the art of knowing, in them, entirely supersedes the consideration of the object. It is with them so mightily pleasant a thing to be always asking Pilate’s question, ‘What is truth?’ that I confess I am unable to perceive that they care particularly for a reply, or are thoroughly persuaded that one is possible.

No one can accuse them of wanting zeal, nor a certain degree of moral fairness; they are disposed to look at evidence on a great many sides, perhaps on every side, but they forget that evidence is to prove something; they forget that things are before they are known, and that in the spiritual just as little as in the material world does the knowledge constitute the reality, though by the knowledge we are made partakers of it. A sense that something has been done, something has been proved in the world, before he came into it; a feeling that he is walking under a firmament of truths, which actually are, though they will be nothing to him unless he enters into personal and real acquaintance with them; this, it seems to me, would be most salutary, most cheering, most invigorating to a young German student. It would not quench his ardour for truth, it would only give it manliness and direction; it would take away his self-conceit and not his courage; it would give him a sense of reality, of which he is now destitute” (80 f.).

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