

The Severance between Education and Being in the Philosophy of Michel Henry

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We are, as it were, familiar with all kinds of criticism, the disdain for education, the ridicule directed to classical culture such as it is still taught in institutions in this day and age exceptionally in the academia. Amidst the praise of laziness, apology for flight, the prevailing inertia, it is inconceivable for the student to find in himself/herself the passion to study, the enthusiasm for intellectual discovery. It would even be necessary categorically denounce the prevailing influence to feel the deduction, richness, and the appeal based on culture. As a Frenchman, a French Philosopher Alain Finkielbraut said, ‘when the hatred of culture itself turns out to be culture, life with thought loss all meaning.’¹ Life and thinking mutually exclude themselves from life, taking refuge in the fringes of existence and this marginality is the intellectual elite in our age, completely cut off from the prevailing culture and exclusively inaccessible to the understanding of the common people. There is no longer an accursed poet, for the criticism of all culture has so much become habits that we have turned out to be indifferent to all far reaching thinking. Relations have been turned up side down altogether. There is no longer any conflict between a marginal life outside culture and culture itself; it is culture itself that has become marginal. In the face of the power of the mass industries of pleasure, what value has the highest realisations the mind got? Nothing at all. We are in an age in which we can reduce the works of the mind to cheap junk. And even if a great work were represented on a small screen, even by the simple fact that it be represented, it would immediately be devalued, even by the reason of the logic of the media itself as much it is subjected to the body and soul of the tendencies of post-modernity. Post-modernity right through goes through the cult of simple representation, it is meant to be merry, it has fun, it loves illusions and the delusions offered it. It has neither the sense of the depth, nor the sense of the sacred. What it venerates is nothing but the production of illusions, the spectacular or the sensational and the immediate. The emotional of the reality show. It only loves showing off, asserting oneself, false appearance, imitation and appearance. In a nutshell, it has no concern for Being and reality. It swims in representation. Ludwig Feuerbach,² in the essence of Christianity asserts that without doubt our time fancies the image than the thing, prefers a copy to the original, inclines towards representation than reality, it singles out appearance than reality. What is sacred to it is only illusion,

1 Alain Finkielkraut, ‘Quand la haine de la culture devient elle-même culturelle, la vie avec la pensée perd toute signification’, in *La Défaite de la pensée*. Paris, Gallimard, 1987, Coll. ‘Blanche’.

2 Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 1841. This is an introduction to the essence of Christianity. For Feuerbach, defining the essence of religion in general is first analysing the constitutive principle of religious illusion as the latter is inherent in the structure of consciousness, understood in its spontaneous movements. By highlighting the self-alienation of religious consciousness, the captive of its own representation and a relation to the world cut off from reflection. Feuerbach then indicates the necessity of a philosophical critique of religion that does not purely or simply aim at denying religious consciousness, but which on the contrary gives an account of the condition of the possibility of this religious consciousness by making part of truth out of it. It thus affirms the anthropological sense of religion that theology as well as metaphysical speculation seeks in order to recover their concepts and dogmas. The ultimate goal of these analyses therefore consists in reappropriating to man himself these attributes which he has supplanted by placing them in an imaginary God, through which he has misunderstood his own essence. This is very timely for the post-modernity.

but what is profane is the truth. Better, the sacred grows in front of it to the extent to which truth fades and illusion grows, even though the apogee of illusion is as well the height of the sacred.

This empire of representation becomes evident, as soon as we examine the place and the role of the media in the post-modern world and particularly one of the televisions. We know that our children love watching the television over much, that in many cases they spend two hours and half daily in front of the television. To watch what? Serials interspersed with advertisements, which fleece their targets to propose them sweets which they make their parents buy for them in the supermarket. They are every day drunk with scenes of purificatory laser, Surrealist fights, sadism, blood, sexual exhibitionism. They are crazy about it as their parents also are. Moreover, on this point sub-culture has no problem in establishing a consensus among generations. We no longer talk to each other, we no longer communicate, but we watch the same serial. We taste the same hypnotic trance together. This gives the feeling of sharing something: the same television programme. And we immediately rush to buy sweets at the supermarket claimed by advertisement. We continue to watch the same stuff and nonsense together as well as same nonsense with satisfaction for in stuff and nonsense as well as rubbish we are one. Do we communicate? In the final analysis we are with others. This defines the average consumer for the advertiser, he is an individual fallen on a sofa, a crate of beer on the table in the lunch and who watch television series or sport. How can he/she play the role of educator, him or her who is the exact copy of the prevailing social model, rightly founded on a culture mistaken for diversion? It is beyond the bounds of possibility. It would be necessary that he or she looks straight at the horror of the situation that he comes out of his lethargy and awakes. That he should redress, and be concerned with himself. Perhaps be concern with his soul. But as it stands, the consumer society has no interest in enabling him go out of this lethargy and that he awakes, but on contrary wants him to remain there. He will be trained as an obedient consumer (this is a pleonasm, because a consumer by definition is obedient). And then, after everything there is diversity in television. We can put television in every room. We can change television to the video game in the computer. That will still be images, still representation, but it will be varied and diverting this will allow for indefinitely continuing to remain within the representations of life, in dreaming life rather than living it by proxy in images. It is simply, we are told, another culture after everything. It is not the reading of Shakespeare, or Camus, it is not the study of Plato, that has got nothing to do with the awakening of intelligence, self-knowledge or that of the wonders of the universe, but it is culture all the same. That fills the mind with all sort of things: images, opinions, stereotypes, loose information, current events, fragments of history. This is very confusing, but that is culture all the same. Know one is ignorant in post-modernity, in the sense in which no one has an empty mind. Every one has kaleidoscopic images in the head and one is gifted with reflexes consisting in repeating the content of this memory.

However, sub-culture easily goes together with illiteracy. Everywhere it is nothing but just filling a form, writing a cheque, it is estimated that in some countries including countries in Europe, America etc., about 10 to 12 % have difficulties and this percentage does not seem to reduce. Illiteracy continue to progress up to the university where the mastery of language has become insufficient where the ignorance or the incompetence of students strikes terror in professors. As the same statistics would have us understand, there are at least 25% of people in several countries living in western institutions who cannot read. They do not have any other system of values other those inculcated by the television.

What is paradoxical in this is that this same society that encourages sub-culture, a culture of diversion in great quantities, never has a society produced like that of the west so much game, leisure parks etc. They have even succeeded in introducing advertisement in school in the United States of America. This very society that easily turns education into derision, at the same time requires a high level of culture

and qualifications in the labour world. Technology itself imposes a conversion in a high level of training. It is not only technology only. All technical and mechanical activity is supervised, in a more or short term by obsolescence. The place of the computer in our society is in this respect very revealing. Information is fast absorbing all intellectual activity of a mechanical character. All that is purely mechanical and depends on a simple calculus, machines can do them better than human beings and faster. Such that in the present world what we need is rightly the plenitude of a typical human creativity, which depends on general knowledge. Beyond the post-modernity and its tendencies. But must be done when we are a media child, a child of post-modernity, when we no longer have values? When we no longer have a feeling of critique and the practise of the autonomy of reflection? When we no longer have a culture? When we already have difficulties reading? When all of us have not received the passion of learning? When everything around you inclines to laziness and diversion? What must be done when society itself does longer care about nourishing intelligence? How could we find our way out when the prevailing inertia suggests leaving the mind in a fallow land and preferring escape into diversion rather than studying?

The educational system finds itself in this contradiction and finds itself helpless surmounting it. Trapped into a world that incites not to study up reading and writing, it only arrives at saving only minority from sub-culture. The geniuses whom we always refer to many cases over the media workers. The typical introverts.

CULTURE AND BARBARISM

Post-modernity is characterized by an explicit separation between the subjective life and intelligence, so that subjective life is reduced to its most primitive vitality and intelligence consigned to knowledge which has gradually cut itself from life. That has lost its dimension of culture. But the implicit radical decision of post-modernity that commands its self-development that of the retreat into vitality is at the same time that which the representation of life ends up taking the place of the real life. Is the dead object termed in post-modernity as culture not detached by representation that objectifies it, from life that ceases to recognize itself from it? A work of art put into spectacular representation in a museum, is watched from outside, such that it is always pleasurable to us not to recognize in it this infinite subjective life vibrating in us, but a simple object. This process by which life ceases from recognizing itself in what it creates is the key to the understanding of the destruction of culture. It does not, to understand the decline of the meaning of culture in post-modernity, in undertaking an analysis only based on the critique of economics. It is essential to understand the separation that has been carried out between culture and life. This is what Michel Henry³ proposes us in *La Barbarie*. What does the term culture indeed mean? Culture means the self-transformation of life, the movement by which it does not cease from modifying itself, in order to attain a form of realisation the highest form of accomplishment; in order to multiply.⁴ Culture is not reduced to instruction founded on objective knowledge which

3 Michel Henry is a French Philosopher of the 20th century and the author of the book entitled, *La Barbarie* published in 1987 by Edition Grasset & Fasquelle. It is also a critique of the whole history of western philosophy.

4 Michel Henry, *La Barbarie*, 1987, p.10. He says literally that ‘Toute culture est une culture de la vie, au double sens où la vie constitue à la fois le sujet de cette culture et son objet. C’est une action que la vie exerce sur elle-même et par laquelle elle se transforme en tant qu’elle est elle-même est ce qui transforme et ce qui est transformé. Culture ne désigne rien d’autre. Culture désigne l’autotransformation de la vie, le mouvement par lequel elle ne cesse de se modifier soi-même afin de

should be detached from the self. It has got nothing to do with a simple objective erudition. Culture recognizes itself in all these forms through internal commotion it encounters in each of us within one's own subjectivity and in the brilliance of one's intelligence. What is common between the reading of a book that provokes in us a commotion of intelligence and of the heart, the passionate burning of listening a great musical work, the joy of painting and of arriving at rendering the landscape of the soul? Nothing other than the eternal manifestation of the self of life in what it has more intimate, in the secrecy of its subjectivity; where even sentiment and intelligence are narrowly united in the same affection. Real separation between the sphere of culture and that of life. Life accomplishes itself as culture and in all forms of culture,⁵ If life is the ceaseless movement of self-transformation and self-accomplishment, it is culture itself, or least it bears it inscribed in it and wished by it as it is. Hence all that carries negation within culture necessarily emanates from a separation between knowledge and life. Every student undergoes a painful experience in the course of studying at the university; the difficulty of he or she having in integrating his or her own life into the knowledge he or she receives, in making a true nourishment out of it. Knowledge, in its objectivity, is foreign to the living internal movement of objectivity; it is so external such that he or she has difficulty in really touching it. In such a way that the student feels himself or herself in exile in relation to what he or she studies and he or she gets bored in studying because he or she has to memorize what is foreign to him or her. Instruction is not true knowledge because it lacks the key element of true knowledge, the conscious self-reference. Knowledge is a food for intelligence only to the extent to which the student arrives at integrating in himself or herself, by making out of it a part of his or her life: to the extent to which he is understood.⁶

Michel Henry's analysis goes back to the extreme foundational event of this separation, the advent of modern science from the consummated between subjectivity and objectivity in Galileo. The representation of the world of modern science creates the objective in reality and discredits the subjective that is an eternal support to it though. It defines the world from mathematical idealities which allows for representing these idealities. As a result, the world of science cut off from its living roots in consciousness is implicitly stricken by a fundamental illusion. The illusion of Galileo as well as of those who, at the end consider science as an absolute science, this took the mathematical and the geometrical world destined to furnish a univocal knowledge of the real world, for this real world itself, this world we can only intuition and can only realise in the concrete mode of our subjective life.⁷ Scientific knowledge took from modernity a change of direction far from self-interrogation. This originally constitutes life, what Michel Henry calls its affectivity.⁸ All objective knowledge of physics, biology, and astronomy, all attempts at objectifying the mind, history, and social behaviour is based on a fundamental illusion, the illusion of a world independent from consciousness, of a knowledge independent from consciousness. This is, as such devoid of meaning. A radical consequence: by taking

parvenir à des formes de réalisation et d'accomplissement plus hautes, afin de s'accroître.”

5 Ibid.

6 In the French language the word “comprendre” is the right word to use in this case. Because *comprendre*, is taking (*prendre*) with (*cum*) with the self. This is the only that remains in the received instruction, what we have really understood in depth, and not simply what has been studied, what remains consigned to the state of abstract representation.

7 Michel Henry, *La Barbarie*, p.14.

8 Michel Henry, *La Barbarie*, p.16. Michel Henry also blames the post-Husserlian, the Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian phenomenologies for sweeping aside this idea of affectivity which he labours to take from the periphery to the centre of philosophy.

this direction science, allowed something fundamental to escape from it, nothing less than its own foundation. But as the ultimate foundation of all the activity of the mind is nothing less than life in which it is originally given, the radical consequence that Michel Henry draws from this is that, in the context which is that of ours in this and age, the relation to science and culture is a relation of reciprocal exclusion. If science is only an objective representation, if on the other hand, life, in its profound subjectivity is nothing other than the living element of culture, it follows that science is not a part of culture. We should understand what is meant here. It is not a question of a simplistic anti-scientism. This is not at all not Michel Henry's intention. It is not to deny in science any value and less again to prohibit or withhold the greatness of scientific geniuses. It is a question of examining without presuppositions, with all radical sagacity or intelligence, the relation between science and culture. As remarkable personalities, Pasteur, Darwin, Einstein, Niels Bohr or Heisenberg, by their discovery of brilliant theories relate to the progress of culture, as branches relate to the root of the tree. They relate to it by the internal renewal of our vision of the world, as much as they have contributed to renewing our philosophical approach to reality. They are like branches of a living reality that is culture. But as ill luck would have it today, in the vision of knowledge that is ours, nothing of as such does appear in the purely technical development of science, for this fragmentary development is situated outside culture. It is objective knowledge that is a sub product of technology itself and its self-development. Only the technical development science, cut off from all culture, has its result in academic teaching (university): the student ceases to be able to recognize himself in it and furthermore, science develops in the process of extreme fragmentation which borders on esotericism. Its productions become an unreadable effect, obscure, incomprehensible to the understanding of many people, accessible only to initiates, completely separate from real life. Hyperspecialised knowledge, elitist and impenetrable. But considerable knowledge by its technological power.

Because culture is fundamentally the self-giveness of life itself, in its aptitude in rightly renewing the understanding which it has for itself, by science denying culture, engenders a frustration of sensibility and intelligence. It produces for itself the desire to know that makes success of a counter-culture. It is the fundamental frustration that scientific knowledge produces today, making forms of habitual esotericism the good days. Paranormal travel, the attraction of all sorts of religious syncretism very confusing, to marginal psychology etc. Of all that is claimed regarding what science is incapable of: knowledge intimately related to life capable of giving it meaning of all that which is capable of offering it a spirituality which official science is in want of and which an accomplished philosophy ought to have carried out a synthesis. Because official philosophy itself is dominated by objective representation, because it has the philosophy itself has become fragmentary and esoteric, shows itself incapable of answering to the appeal that which has always been addressed to it. More is philosophised in café philos than on the benches of universities.

Such is the confusing situation in our age, of an epoch that has ruined even the meaning of culture. An epoch of the complete loss of the global vision of life, the epoch of the extreme fragmentation of knowledge, the separation of the fields of knowledge, incommunicable thinking, the epoch of intellectual anarchy where no perspective emerges that is capable of nourishing intelligence, no profound and significant apprehension of man. The epoch of the self-destruction of Philosophy. According to Michel Henry,⁹ barbarism is not a beginning; it is always second to the state of culture necessarily preceding it. Barbarism, Joseph le Maistre said, is a ruin, not a rudiment. Culture is therefore primary. Even the most deceptive of the activity and social organisation that, which we can borrow, for instance, from primitive hordes, are already modes of culture.

9 Michel Henry, *La Barbarie*, p.13.

What is then this barbarism characterising us and how is it understood? If life and culture are intimately related, so that culture is ever a joy of the self a life that encounters itself at the same time as intelligence and sensibility, of what power immanent to life can it be situated? Michel Henry provides a remarkable answer, that barbarism is unused energy. On the contrary, every culture is liberation of energy; forms of culture are concrete modes of this liberation. Failure to accomplishing itself in the sphere of culture, failure of being to give to itself, to create, the unused energy returns against itself and provokes the emergence of forms of self-destruction within life. Creating oneself therefore a situation of extreme tension in which the individual debates. The greatest dissatisfaction and more and more, the need of falling apart. There is name to mean this: 'the sickness of life'.¹⁰ The sick life not be able to accomplish itself, to realise itself, therefore tends to find refuge in flight. Flight into exteriority in which it is a question of escaping from oneself and thus emptying oneself of what one is. From the weight of one's anguish and of this suffering. Here is a characteristic trait of the empire of the sickness of life in our post-modern world. Self-flight is the title on which one can almost reorganize what is happening before us. It is here that the use that we make of television in post-modernity a surprising relief. It is not metaphysically possible to take flight from oneself, for precisely in essence life is self-distress and it coincides with the self. Life is the self that never goes out of itself. Be that as it may, when life is confined to a sick, dissatisfied, and unhappy subjectivity, it has nothing; it seems but leisure or pleasure of reducing itself to a condition of a stupid vision before something that moves. It always has a solution of plunging itself into a hypnotic trance in order to attempt at forgetting, to forget that it has neither meaning nor a direction. It is rightly this stupidity at issue, as the ultimate form of flight, and not the image as such. That is flight in the form of a projection in exteriority, is what is expressed in saying that it blinds the spectator into multiple images. But do art, plastic arts and even literature, poetry not also propose us images?. The aesthetic image is very different, in the interior investment in which life is realised in it. It participates in the self-accumulation of the latter and thus the essence of life in its accomplishment: culture. The brainlessness of the spectator has got nothing to do with that, for it is situated precisely at a sub-conscious level. It is the question of unused energy of life attempting to take flight from itself., of forgetting itself as life, of disappearing: of dying. Not as a physical death, but more essentially again, not living one's life, of dying as presence to the self. T.S. Eliot as well as other pessimistic poets highlight this life living death in the wasteland.¹¹ Disappearing in the changing flux and the unreal of the other life that will never be mine. An existence by means of the media, where it is a question of living one's life, but that of the other, which narrates, agitates strikes, reveals and makes love in your place. This phenomenological love is consummated when two processes come to their own end: the negation of intelligence, the negation of sensibility. Coming to this end, death has done its job and the telespectator is just a grim look enchained on a coloured screen. He has lost his soul.

Culture is not an objective content that is poured out in the direction of the consumer of the media, accustomed to zapping on 45 television channels. It is not measured to the audience to attest the objective performance of a transmission. This invading empire of technology, of the image and its consumption is not culture. Because culture is not an object. It is indissolubly subject/object. Culture is situated in a conscious encounter of subjectivity with itself; it is addressed to the soul in everyone of us. What is then the meaning of culture, if it has got nothing to do with the hypnotic bombardment of images and information, is not the residue of the freeze past that ought to be preserved in museums? The ideal of the culture of classical humanities have often been caricatured, in order to crush in an

10 Michel Henry calls it (in Fr. 'La maladie de la vie'), *La Barbarie*, pp.83-107.

11 T.S.Eliot (1888-1965), *The Wasteland*, 1922.

excessive erudition, in a bookish intellectualism and out dated knowledge. But an educated man is one who has chosen to make out of his life a work of art and work of intelligence. Culture does not concern only the concern for survival or the flight into diversion; it introduces after everything a refinement in the art of living, a delicatessen that comes at the same time from an integrated knowledge and from an awakened knowledge. An educated man is capable of realising a synthesis of information without being saturated and has formed in himself autonomy, he has his own judgment and an anaesthetic sense rendering him capable appreciating creations of the intellect and the creations of art. There is no culture without a constant new openness of intelligence and of the heart in which the spiritual dimension is never absent. Culture in this sense means the development of spiritual functions by study and a prolonged exercise. That does not mean erudition, a memorisation of knowledge. Culture is a concern, not of instruction, but of knowledge, in what develops in the interiority of life, in what contributes to the plenitude of a living personality. Therefore, in pure knowledge the subject and object can never be cut off from each other, purely knowledge is non-dual. It is knowledge by identity. It is this knowledge that is found wanting in our current culture and which is lacking in our current educational system. As long as we do not give to new generations access to knowledge of conscience, our education shall be without foundation and our culture will remain a mental decorum, a seductive worm perhaps, but profoundly superficial. Not only must culture open the book of the universe, but it must in the first place open the book of life and of my own life. It is by nourishing knowledge of the self that the desire to learn itself is developed. It is through self-knowledge that the passion to study is awakened, that the love of study finds its way of expression, and not with second hand knowledge. If our education today remains unsatisfactory and that it be entirely re-examined, it is because it is in want of love. Without love, we can neither study nor educate; and least again to share and communicate. Hence the crisis of culture that our epoch undergoes is profound. The crisis of culture is also the crisis of education. There is crisis when meaning is lost. There is a crisis of culture and a crisis of education, when we have lost sight of the vocation of culture and the vocation of education, when we no longer know what an educated man means and that we no longer have any comprehension of what a completely educated man. This lost is not without relation with the drift that has lead to seeing in education only an objective transformation. This same drift ends by making us believe that education consists in preparing minds to function in the frame work of business industries. Let us be clear, to talk the language of computer science, education does not have as a function the formatting of intelligence of the youth to the system of the exploitation of industries. It has as a mission the plenitude and the development of a person gifted with a culture and autonomous intelligence.

LIFE, VALUES AND THE MEANING OF EDUCATION

It is true that life has no meaning because the meaning placed in representation is only a representation of life. The goal of life is precisely to live. Life is accomplished in its own expansion and in its own joy of the self. But that does not mean on the contrary that all value giving to the meaning to life be arbitrary. The service of life is the highest task and the noblest and a system of values must know how to incarnate it. It must not become a constraint, a depository of prejudices, a promise for elsewhere, supported by which curse we do not know. The image of which religion has so often shown, by only knowing how to make God in man's image or for the last man. As if the unique function of a system of value was only to keep the dog in check. This justifies Nietzsche's criticisms.

As system of values is an expression of what we are and our intimate relation to life. Thus, for Michel

Henry, the true name for the crisis of values going through our society is termed the sickness of life.¹² And when the sickness of life attacks a civilisation, the latter is oriented to barbarism.¹³ The sickness of life that consumes our epoch is developed in practices, inscribed by the projection to flight. Self-escape is the title in which we can almost classify all that takes place in front of us. Hyperactivity only concerns the social system. And the habitual frenzy, it has ceased from coinciding with the gift of the self of a pathetic investment. We see around us the helpless state in which our youth finds itself. When the present imposes its diktat and that it is no longer understood in the light of spiritual values, the imagination and intelligence are only developed in the sense of practical utility or of the projection in the imaginary. The child has no other solution in front of him but to grow in an artificial world that does everything to dispense with an expressive interrogation on the meaning of events and the meaning of things. Study is confined to the choice of a career, and again it is not a choice, for indeed, one only follows the labour market. Knowledge is no longer developed for itself, in the direction of self enrichment. Artistic creation is no longer perceived as a magnified expression of the self, but it has only become a diversion. Work has lost all links in the realisation of the self. Work has become technical and depersonalised. This therefore commands the finality of industries; it is no longer mass production. Every where it is spread a unique orientation in the sense of efficiency and a purely technical capacity. The concept of performance becomes a value and we claim to give courses to train personality. Whereas it is just a matter of inculcating a sense of business. Social relations are brought back to the relations of rights or relations founded on purely material interest. What unites is no longer relation of the self and self completeness which gives and gives itself, but the exchange of goods, its accountability, its investments, its calculus, its hypocrisies, its secrecies and lies. No one no longer knows what authentic human, honest and right relation means, an open relation to the other and in which the self is given. All the time we spend with others is first of all counted in psychological time. Exit the existential dimension of the moment. The value of objects is their cash value. What do say of people, since they are in this context brought back to their function and their power measured and their solvability of their account in the bank. All the post-modern values are organised around a matrice value, that of consumption. A medical doctor who serves the well-being of men is on this fact less honoured, meaning remunerated, than sport star or show business. Art, in what is highly elevated, in its aptitude of touching the sensibility, throw light on human existence belongs to a different world, a world other than that of life, a life of spectacle. Philosophy is commonly perceived as an vain and an useless enterprise. That of asking oneself questions no one commonly asks them. As if it was an implicitly accepted tacit contract according to which it is useless to think, worthless to interrogate oneself. The moment that the shelves of the super market are full and television programmes are attractive, one is already in the best of all possible worlds. One can therefore sleep in his laurels and dispense with all reflection. The great majority of adults in our society have no longer read a good book since several years, but on the contrary, they can recite by heart all the television programmes of the whole week. What is characteristic of our age, making out of it barbarism of an unknown type. Is precisely being a society in want of all culture and subsisting independently of the latter.

It is incumbent on education to take care of the understanding of spiritual values, by allowing each everyone to rediscover them himself/herself. The system of values of a society is before everything a choice of society. It is in essence changing and relative and we are its co-creators. We can very well choose a different future by leaning on different values from that which took place in the past. Let us go further. If we want in the future a different world, if we want a more free world, a joyous world,

12 I have previously explained that Michel calls it in French 'La maladie de la vie'.

13 Again 'La Barbarie' the title of Michel Henry's book.

respectful of life, a world in which life feels itself in a sort in its place because it is in itself, it is necessary that we promote other values than which took place to date. If the surpassing of post-modernity must take place, it is necessary at least give in education a fundamental importance of three essential values:

CONSCIENCE

An enlightened society is made of conscious individuals. It is not a lethargic herd governed by some, taking all decisions in its place. All that can be done in the sense of the development of conscience is useful. A human being ought to grow in conscience, for it is precisely the expansion of conscience that enables him to grow. What is beneficial to awakening and lucidity allows for access to a greater life and freer, must be encouraged. All that contributes to making the mind gloomy, to collective stupidity, to the idiocy of the masses ought to be avoided. It is already a good measure of our decisions to ask whether they go in the direction of a more elevated consciousness, or a less conscience. Adjusting our decisions on the value of conscience would have an extraordinary effect on the impact of our acts.

HONESTY

An enlightened society is made of individuals having an elevated sense of integrity and for whom honesty is a fundamental value. Honesty is coherence with the self. We can only be honest to others by being honest ourselves. Honesty means the exterior faithfully reflects the interior, it consists in saying what we think and in doing what we say, without distortion. If I say what I am, without restriction, honestly, then I no longer agree to the reality which I previously constructed by illusion or by fear. Simplicity takes the place of what I put before and believed obligatory and I go from fear to confidence by putting into conformity the exterior and the interior. Simplicity is the dwelling in which the subject maintains its self-experience. The place of self coincidence precisely in which all life encounters itself. Honesty eliminates all hypocrisy or artificiality in a relation, it eliminates what is a generator of confusion and doubt or suspicion in a relation. Honesty is a direct contribution to integrity, for precisely, for it allows the interior to faithfully reflect itself to the exterior remaining one, without division. Honesty is value in that it contributes to the stability of the interior and furnishes a foundation to self-esteem which not depend to the judgement of the other. Like conscience, it contributes to self-reference which has its profound place in autonomy.

RESPONSIBILITY

An enlightened society is made up of individuals who have an elevated and considerable sense of responsibility. To be responsible means having the concern or solicitude with respect to what is confided to us and which we guard, since that of the child whom we ought to must care until he becomes an adult, up the care we give to beyond our family, to our neighbourhood up to the entire earth of which we hope to protect. Responsibility implies an awareness of the consequences of our acts beyond the search of immediate satisfaction. That also means being aware that nothing is separated, that all decision commits us and that we are in the same boat on this earth. Educating in the child the value of responsibility makes him recognize the farther implications of an action and to look to look at the world as his broadened family. Education in responsibility decompartmentalizes the short sighted views of the ego by offering them an unlimited perspective. Responsibility invites the adult put himself on the shoulders of the child the care of his own choices, instead of doing them in his place. The care of not hiding the consequences of the child. It gives lucidity a concrete impact in action by maintaining the flames of attention in the heart of all our decisions.

As a matter of conclusion, in an age in which the swarming of news mounts the rumour of extremism, in an age in which many countries in the world do no longer offer any alternative to military

dictatorship and religious fundamentalism, it is time we understood that the way to democracy we profoundly hope for is based on the historical development of culture and on nothing else. If the meaning of culture falls apart, the meaning of democracy also.