

## Teaching in a Brave New World

*Louis Van Delft*

People say the same thing is happening everywhere, even though there are local variations; all over the world the study of the ‘humanities’, and even of languages (other than the new *lingua franca*, American English), is going through an unprecedented crisis that may rightly make us fear for their very survival into the future. In Europe, probably never since the Renaissance has the threat of a return to barbarism or vacuity (the difference is not very great) in education been so clear.

My aim is not to launch into the complaint we have heard all too often, whose repetition, one might even say monotony, is proof of the impotence of the men of goodwill who do take it up. As far as France is concerned, I shall simply refer to a conference (another one) held recently, which brought together (genuine) good minds – among them Dominique Boutet, Emmanuel Bury, Antoine Compagnon, Michel Zink – and resulted in an excellent little book, focusing, rather more so than many others, on concrete reality and action: *Propositions pour les enseignements littéraires* (2000). From it I take the following few lines written by Alain Finkielkraut (pp. 91–6) in his pointed argument against what he ironically calls ‘the cultural revolution in our schools’.

According to his analysis, which comes from the advocates of reform at all costs, ‘teachers, who are too devoted to their subject and their libraries, are simultaneously guilty of archaism, selfishness and elitism’. As for teachers of literature in particular, ‘they chose an old humanistic profession but now we are asking them to work in a new humanitarian one. Taken together, helping kids at risk and defending the equal status of all people require us, if not always to close our books, at least to move on from a limited and sanctified conception to an open conception of literature, [to] texts that anyone can produce.’ Then Finkielkraut concludes: ‘Schools are not dominated by a liberal idea that has become tyrannical. They are dominated by a democratic idea that has become all-consuming. It is this idea that rejects the concept of art as one of greatness, a strict hierarchy of values, in favour of a cult of equality whose slogan is: we are all writers, artists, creators’ (2000: 91–6).

As with so many other debates, we can see how far the one about education has

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become political, in France at least. And this development is probably inevitable, given the current state of French society. But we can also approach the question from a higher level, and this, far from fudging the issue, means instead that we examine it in a more accurate light. It is for this reason that I would like, at several points in these pages, to quote an exceptional man who is scandalously forgotten, even in his native land.

The person I am talking about is Alain (1868–1951). His fate has been one that will soon render unknown even such names as Montaigne, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Vauvenargues, Chamfort, Joubert . . ., that is to say, the names of the great family of French moralists of whom Nietzsche said that it had produced a kind of literary ‘chamber music’ unmatched in world literary history. So it would perhaps be useful if in a few words I introduce Alain (whose real name was Emile-Auguste Chartier) and especially the text by him that I very much want to familiarize you with.

Alain finds his rightful place among us when we explore our splendid and difficult profession as teachers of languages and literature in a world that is often so different from the one described by the works we are called to pass on. Alain was himself a teacher of philosophy. But he was definitely not a philosophy teacher as the role is very widely conceived of, a combination of bookworm and dreamer who has opted to live among abstractions. Alain was hugely respected by his students in the top class (he himself had studied at the *École Normale Supérieure*). He was nothing like the ‘philosophy master’ caricatured by Molière. Besides the fact that he was a master who inspired respect because of his knowledge as well as his modesty, he was bathed in the glory that came from having seen war at close quarters. And nevertheless he more than anyone was focused on and fascinated by life, aware of its Heraclitean ebb and flow, attuned to it by a kind of superior confidence. (For the record I should point out that Alain’s war was the one that in France we normally call ‘*La Grande Guerre*’, the ‘Great War’, the 1914–18 war, which consumed and crushed infinitely more lives than the 1939–45 war, though the latter was so pitiless and cruel in its own particular way.)

Because he was an alumnus of a very prestigious institution, Alain could very easily have served, like the majority of his fellow-students, as an NCO. He insisted on fighting in the ranks, in signals. This point alone gives us an idea of what democracy meant to him.

In a way teachers are in ‘signals’ too. Alain was not only, like the Golden Age authors, a faultless practitioner of writing, always remembering, as La Bruyère insists, that ‘making a book is a skill just like making a clock’; as a teacher he was also an incomparable ‘transmitter of signals’. If, from among the whole of his rich existential work, I focus only on his attitude during the Great War, it is not solely for lack of space. It is simply that the text by Alain that I in my turn would like to pass on to you is very closely linked to that tragic episode in world history. Indeed the history of this text, which today is so little known, and even hard to find, is curious, and it is important that you should be made aware of its origins before we go further.

These wonderful pages were in the first instance . . . a speech at a prize-giving. In actual fact Alain gave it in 1904, on the last day of the school year at the Lycée Condorcet. Prize-giving used to be a fairly formal ceremony bringing together all the

school's pupils and attended by the whole of the teaching staff. The ceremony was punctuated by speeches, which were usually terrible, larded with Ciceronian rhetoric, and it was designed to reward with prizes and 'accessits' (books) the more 'deserving' students. I know of no other prize-giving speech that has become part of the history of French literature. But we may imagine that Alain himself, who was always so very modest about his writing, was aware that this brief text might have a value, a reach far beyond the school event that had been the occasion for its composition. Indeed the title he gave it way back in 1904 was a magnificent one: *Les marchands de sommeil* (The Sleep Traffickers).

Then, after a very long period of neglect, Alain took up the text again without changing a word. This was precisely 38 years later. As far as I know this kind of 'reuse', borrowing from oneself, which is common practice for quite a few authors, composers and painters, is rare in Alain's work. But that is not the important point. Much more significant is the date when the author returned to a speech of his written for a specific occasion in the past: 1942. This was certainly one of the darkest hours in the whole history of the human race. And here is something that is no less remarkable: at that moment the text may have lost its original title, but the author put it in a position that is without doubt a place of honour: as 'Foreword' to a book that Alain was publishing for the first time in 1942 under a title that is also magnificent and in fact has an organic connection with *Marchands de sommeil*. This book was the collection of 'essays' entitled *Vigiles de l'esprit* (Night Watch for the Mind).<sup>1</sup>

This new title gives us some idea of how far he too was alive to the 'occasion'. Only this time the occasion was no longer a banal but joyful prize-giving at a famous Paris *lycée* amid the euphoria of the approaching summer holidays. The very different 'occasion' was the awful tumult in which the destiny of the West was at stake, and beyond that the destiny of the world and even the whole of culture. It will not be hard to fathom the reasons that impel me to choose to reproduce a few passages from that text when present circumstances arouse anxieties of the same type as those that Alain felt in the 1930s and 1940s.

Here then is a first extract:

Being asleep is not closing your eyes and keeping still . . . So what is being asleep? It is a way of thinking; being asleep is not thinking very much, thinking as little as possible. Thinking means weighing things up; being asleep means ceasing to weigh up evidence. It means taking as true, without question, every whisper of the senses and all the whispering in the world. Being asleep is accepting; it is not caring if things are absurd, not caring if they arise and die at the drop of a hat; it is not finding it odd if distances are cancelled out, if heavy things do not weigh much any more, if light things weigh heavy, if the whole world suddenly changes, just like when, all of a sudden, in the theatre, forests, castles, spires, mountains lean forward as if blown by the wind, before disappearing under the stage.

Yes, when we are asleep, it is a bit like being in the theatre; we do not expect the truth, not for the moment at least . . .

On the other hand waking up means taking a stand. Waking up is refusing to believe without understanding; it means questioning, looking for something other than what is on the surface; doubting what we see before us, putting out our hands to try to touch what we see, opening our eyes to try to see what we are touching; it means comparing evidence and only accepting consistent pictures; it means putting side by side the real and the possible

to get at the truth; it means saying to the first impression: you don't exist. Waking up means starting to search for the world. When babies in their cradle learn to perceive, what a critical lesson they teach us!

And now you realize, my friends, that there are many ways of being asleep, and that many people who are apparently wide awake, who have their eyes open, move about, speak, are in fact asleep; the place is full of sleepwalkers . . .

And, just like in the fable, you will meet on your way all sorts of Sleep Traffickers. I think I see and hear all the sleep traffickers in your midst, on the threshold of life. They tout different ways of sleeping. Some of them sell old-style sleep; they say people have been sleeping like this for so many centuries. Others sell unusual kinds of sleep that, according to them, are much more worthy of human beings; with some it is sleeping while sitting writing; with others sleeping standing up and engaging in action; yet others offer sleep in the air, eagles' sleep, above the clouds. Some sell dreamless sleep; others chatting sleep; others again provide a sleep full of marvellous dreams; weird dreams; orderly dreams; a past without remorse and a future without danger; dreams in which everything turns out right, as in a well-structured play. There are also noble dreams for sale, dreams of universal justice and happiness. The cleverest of them sell sleep in which the dreams are in fact the world. Why wake up then? The world cannot add anything to the dream.

I have to try hard to restrain myself so as not to give in to the teacher's professional defect of providing a commentary on this text, crammed as it is with felicities of style. But this stylistic achievement would be as nothing without the backdrop that we are constantly aware of, the meditation on History that sustains the inspiration throughout. For those of us who are judging in retrospect, almost a century after those pages were written, how prescient they seem! Was the whole 20th century not dominated by the 'sleep traffickers'? Have we not been able to measure the extent of the havoc wreaked by the drug sold by those traffickers?

However, it is not world history, or literary history, we are concerned with here, but our function as teachers, our position in society, at a time when the humanities are in serious danger. And can we gaily wash our hands of the very accusation that Alain makes against those who concoct the heavy sleep that dulls the mind? Can we be satisfied with the realization that few dangerous revolutionaries have been recruited from the ranks of language and literature teachers? So are the trouble-makers always other people? Are we naturally always on the right side of the barricades?

Certainly, even if we are suffering from the fate that is currently being meted out to the 'humanities', suffering from the conditions in which too many of us are reduced in carrying out their teaching role, we also have to submit ourselves to some self-criticism. Sartre was not completely mistaken when he called us (in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*, 1947) 'graveyard caretakers'. Indeed we are too often happy simply to perform a kind of ceremony for the dead. All too often the past becomes a refuge for us from a present where we do not feel at home. But is that putting ourselves on the same level as those it is our business to introduce to the things of the mind and to beauty? Can you really be a good teacher when you, as it were, stand apart from your own times? And do these times not belong first and foremost to the '*nouveaux venus dans le monde*' – new arrivals in the world (as La Fontaine puts it so brilliantly)? They are theirs more fully, more intensely and more legitimately than they are

ours. (I must point out that, without at all adopting the emphasis on 'youth' that is so often merely populist, I am speaking as a teacher approaching the end of his 'service'. What I have to say on this matter is addressed only to those who are several decades older than the students they are dealing with.)

All too often language or literature teachers are disconnected from the world they live and work in. It is true that the world of our time – the atomic age, to be precise – is unrecognizable compared with what it was for thousands of years. Furthermore, it is still changing at such breakneck speed, and so radically, that over a period of just a few years it changes even more than it used to do over several centuries.

What in fact is the present situation of the *theatrum mundi*? In the 21st century there are scarcely any authors left who talk about the 'theatre of the world'. This is because of a more or less general dissolution so thorough-going that, to describe it, the word 'fragmentation', however common it may be in modern scientific language, is not even the most appropriate term. Rather, we have to say atomization, disintegration, if we compare our era's *imago mundi* with the one current in Antiquity or the classical period.

Hardly anything of what used to be the basic framework and structures of perception and representation – space, time, the hierarchical ordering of the universe, matching of language to the object of discourse – is now in place or recognizable. The 'real time' of communication via satellite has shattered G. Poulet's 'human time'. And there are notable consequences of every kind. We have only to compare time as experienced by Mme de Sévigné with time as lived (?) by Internet users; or compare the complete lack of news in the past from a husband or son at sea, creating an anxiety that affected the whole of one's interior life, sometimes for years and years, with the instant relief of an initial concern thanks to the mobile phone; or compare the unending hours of leisure or boredom that could be devoted to reading a novel with the furtive moments snatched from the restlessness of modern life that is ever more '*tumultuaire*' (Montaigne already said it back then). We can well see that the breaking down of time has incalculable effects not only on the whole of our emotional life but even on the conditions, the agreed norms for any reading, any 'communication' by and in art. As we have moved from the theatre of yesterday's world to today's, has even the key element of time remained recognizable?

There is the same lack of common denominator where space is concerned. Rather than being dislocated, it has somehow been abolished, since we can simultaneously follow a probe plunging into infinity and see the share prices as they change in all the financial centres on our planet, which has turned into a village.

Neither the pace, nor the economics and style of life today retain any of their past 'stability', nothing of the foundation, the stable bedrock of the 'conduct of life' in the classical period. More generally, the whole ordering of Dante's universe, which, it must be said, lasted for centuries after the *Commedia*, died well before 'the death of God'. And though in past centuries the 'theatre of the world' was not easy to decipher, today's lack of 'readability of the world' (H. Blumenberg) arouses a 'tragic sense of life' (Unamuno) that is quite widely shared. Rather than a feeling of the absurd, this sense appears paradoxical when we consider the largely calm, confident view of the human condition that was held during centuries when tragedy, in the shape of a thousand ills that no one knew how to prevent or cure (plague, diseases,

even mild ones, wars, famines, chance . . .), used to mount its attacks very frequently as work and life went on.

Finally language itself, the last bastion (one might have hoped) against the dislocation of traditional markers, has, at least since surrealism, fallen under the influence of a 'suspicion' quite similar to what Nathalie Sarraute describes in her essay on the 'nouveau roman' (new novel) generation.

In short, robbed of its age-old foundations, the 'theatre of the world' has gradually developed cracks and, as a certain kind of contemporary 'melancholy prose' says along with Cioran, is now nothing but 'disintegration', ruin-strewn terrain. The very titles of some of the most representative dramatic works of our time proclaim this defeat, this collapse: *Fin de partie* (End Game), *Le Roi se meurt* (The King is Dying), *En attendant Godot* (Waiting for Godot). In Ionesco's work the proliferation, the excess of objects, as in *Les Chaises*, underlines the emptiness in a tragic irony. Just as dramatic art itself has become unrecognizable, in some sense foreign to itself by comparison with its nature as the classical centuries understood it, the *theatrum mundi* revisited now offers merely a view of remnants of columns that had seemed everlasting in their solidity.

At this point allow me to quote again from Alain's words. Having died in 1951, he obviously did not experience the upheavals, the kind of convulsions, that characterize the last quarter of the 20th century in particular. Even though he was a sufficiently honourable man to bear with grace the misfortunes of History, we cannot help being grateful in retrospect that he did not have to hear people talking about 'company culture', 'productivity culture', 'consumer culture' or 'profit culture'. But he witnessed historic disasters that the vast majority of us were fortunate enough to escape (though it is not certain that we will always be privileged to avoid them). For this reason alone, his experience and his 'lesson' are especially valuable. Here is the very heart of his text on the *Marchands de sommeil*, his urgent warning, which is so topical, against 'graveyard systems':

People who sincerely wish to think are often like the silkworm, which attaches its thread to every object around it, and does not notice that this shining web soon solidifies, dries out and becomes opaque, that it casts a veil over things and soon conceals them; that this secretion, which is full of rich light, nevertheless creates darkness and a prison all around it; that it spins its own tomb in gold thread and that it can then only sleep, having turned into an inert chrysalis, an amusement and ornament for others, of no use to itself. In the same way thinking people often fall asleep in their graveyard systems; and so they sleep, separated from the world and other people; and so they sleep while others unravel their gold thread and adorn themselves with it.

They have a system, as we have traps to catch and imprison. In this way all thinking is put in a cage, and people can come and see it; a wonderful sight; an instructive sight for children; everything is tidied away into ready prepared cages; the system has organized everything in advance. However, truth dismisses all that. Truth belongs to one specific thing at a particular moment but is universal at no moment. When we seek it out, we shake off systems and become human beings; we keep ourselves for ourselves, we keep ourselves free, powerful, ever-ready to seize each thing as it is, to deal with each question as if it were the only question, as if it were the first question, as if the world was new-minted yesterday. Drink of the river Lethe in order to be reborn.

Once again the literary historian feels tempted to demonstrate how many rich traditions crop up just in these two paragraphs, which are steeped in cultural memory and yet make completely relevant the metaphors and themes they contain. For instance, the image of the silkworm is fully informed by what Alain observed as regards the negative consequences of ideologies. Traditionally authors like Fénelon who decide to make use of this image give it a clearly positive value: for them the chrysalis evokes above all imminent metamorphosis, liberation and take-off into life. There is none of this in Alain: the 'secretion, which is full of rich light', is reversed and becomes infected with a value that is exactly the opposite: it warns of darkness and the death of thought.

The invitation, which is so eloquent in its brevity and its formulation almost as a command – *'Boire le Léthé, pour revivre'* – arrives to temper the doom-laden tone of the preceding vision. And with good reason! How could one offer as the sole guide on the 'human journey' to the students gathered for the celebration, those 'new arrivals', the image of a tomb where all living thought is imprisoned? Does life not have much more in common with a banquet? It has no use for thinking that no longer has any link to the human community, that serves as a surety for those who misuse it, as a pretext for those who exploit it for despicable ends.

Equally, in a fresh reversal, but this time in the opposite direction, the ancient image of Lethe – the river of death in the underworld – is promoted to the highest value: far from imparting the idea of death, the river of oblivion becomes the supreme source of life. What a marvellous lesson, advising us to forget everything memory has so laboriously stored away! What a salutary counsel, inviting us to forget any knowledge that prevents the mind from soaring, any bric-a-brac that encumbers us; this advice refers back to the whole anti-scholastic tradition as well as one of the most significant lessons of Montaigne's life ('Would I have been less ready to die before reading the *Tusculanes*? I think not', *Essais*, III: 12).

But it is often a kind of turning in on ourselves, a wariness, an unconscious defeatism that encourage many of our colleagues to think that the battle is already lost in any case, that 'they' – the Beotians, the new barbarians, the new helots, in short the students before whom we may feel we are quite vainly casting pearls – will be incapable of 'savouring' the 'flavour' of the treasure over which they are apathetically, insolently dozing. But even if there are some 'little savages' among these new arrivals, can we despair of a whole generation that after all cannot help being on earth in the age of mass education, universities for the masses and, worst of all, the lack of concern and vote-catching rhetoric of so many politicians?

In that area too we need to ask ourselves some questions as to our attitude. Have we not allowed ourselves to be taken in too often? Have we not in fact gone along too passively with certain sleep traffickers? Is it really our job to sing from the same hymn sheet as so many strategists and decision-makers to the effect that nothing is as important as 'vocational courses'?

On the contrary, our role is to remind people that, beyond a technical training, a practical skill, and especially beyond 'job opportunities', whose crucial importance we will naturally never dispute, there is another preparation that is even more crucial, and that literature and languages alone are capable of teaching: preparation for life. All too often we paint a totally unappealing picture of the literature of the

past, when we fail to show they were written by flesh-and-blood human beings. All too often we give an idea of foreign languages that inevitably inspires boredom and rejection, when we fail to show that they express and reveal the diversity of cultures. All too often the subject we teach appears dreary, monotonous and dead because we do not know how to bring it to life.

Meeting this challenge, winning this battle is not as huge a task as it seems. I am often amazed to see how ready pupils' or students' interest is to be aroused, and by the same works they make a face at when they see them, works they look down their noses at from the pedestal of their naïve 'modernity', works they are ready to dismiss, shut out of their whole lives without examining them, without giving them the smallest chance. But their curiosity is aroused immediately they are shown that these works are not about anything other than . . . themselves! Because it is a fact that in every place, at every time, in every age, literature always is a little bit complicit with self-love!

It is vital to show the lasting value, the astonishing topicality of some of the major themes of literature – and of course I am not talking only about French literature but all literatures. I am thinking of a theme such as life as a journey (this is the ancient *topos* of the *homo viator* that you can find quite easily in all European literatures at every period). Or the theme of the world as a theatre (*theatrum mundi*), of which exactly the same observation could be made. I am thinking of the theme of existence as a battle (whether it be a spiritual, moral or material battle, a battle against society, others or oneself). And then again the theme of the quest for happiness, with the whole range of the various possible attitudes to life, from libertinism to asceticism, that have been suggested as solutions to the 'existential equation' (Hegel) from earliest Antiquity right up to the present day.

What is more, all these themes can be found in many non-European literatures. I have no expertise where they are concerned: the 'comparative' literature I was taught was even then vulnerable to many criticisms, and is very far from being the 'really comparative literature' that René Etiemble dreamed of. But since, like our world that has been reduced to the size of a village, the 'crisis' of culture is assuming 'world-wide' dimensions, I would bet that the same 'approach' to the teaching of literature via the topic of existence, which is still so personal and so relevant, via the intimate relationship between literature and the (mis)adventure of life, is able to attract to the humanities, wherever they may be, even those whom Ortega y Gasset (in *The Revolt of the Masses*) bluntly labeled modern civilization's spoilt children, *señoritos*.

In other words we must show that literature is a forum, the prime place where all human beings meet, where those who went before us on this 'ball' (to adopt Voltaire's term) pass on their life experience to the 'new arrivals', as older siblings do. We must show that every one of these same questions, that seem so new, so confusing often, so troubling and hard to solve, to the most recent arrivals on earth, are in fact precisely the ones faced by all the preceding generations.

We must also show that these great books – whichever culture produced them – are a kind of 'archive' and they help us in our turn to make our own 'life choices' (this is another perennial *topos* that is also capable of persuading people to study literature and languages). For the most recent arrivals in their turn, like all who lived



on earth a while before them, are at any moment required to make the same kinds of choices at very similar forks in the road.

In short we should take advantage of the extraordinary power that literature and languages alone possess to allow us, as Michelet's marvellous expression has it, to 'meet ourselves'.

In a way teachers, especially of languages and literature, are nothing other than 'go-betweens'. I hope I may be forgiven this rather strong word: the encounters facilitated by books from the past (and the present) and languages of the present really are irreplaceable 'confrontations' that have a decisive influence on the rest of one's life.

However, we should remain clear-headed. According to the implacable laws of famines, wars, exploitation, for the overwhelming majority of the 'new arrivals' the 'question of existence' is posed with an urgency, a 'pressure' such that all the problems, all the themes I have touched on above, can only be seen – quite rightly – as 'literature'. And all literature can only seem as distant from reality, as unconnected with life, as creatures from Mars and the whole of science fiction.

That is all the more reason not to adopt an attitude of guilty tolerance towards those who, without always being totally aware of it, happen to be the privileged ones in a very hard world. All the more reason as well not to over-indulge in tolerance towards ourselves.

I have not been particularly gentle with our profession. And yet I could detail many other criticisms. We sometimes praise to the skies theoreticians (of language or literature) and then let them lapse into obscurity after only a few years. For example: at the recent celebration of the tercentenary of Racine's death it was surprising to note that the very critics (Barthes, Goldmann, Mauron . . .) who we used quite recently to think had the monopoly of truth were now hardly even mentioned! We must admit in all honesty that such u-turns do no credit at all to our critical judgement. Either those theoreticians deserved to be praised and put on a pedestal in that way, and in that case they still deserve it because they held undeniable truths; or else we realize after a few years that their glory was not deserved, that we were simply following fashionable trends, and that their opinions do not stand up to analysis, so we were lacking in that very clear-headedness we are so proud of passing on. My example may seem incongruous, but specialists in linguistic science or literary criticism, if they are honest, will be able to quote many cases of this sort of inappropriate fad and admiration.

In the same way, rather than sticking to our own territory and 'clinging on' to our illusory preserve, we would be well advised to take our inspiration from critical ideas on the traditional teaching of science, especially physics, from eminent scholars such as André Cherpak or Pierre-Gilles de Gennes. This teaching, they maintain, is far too abstract, too theoretical. And the method recommended in a series of extremely relevant manuals entitled 'La main à la pâte' (shoulder to the wheel) suggests closing the gap between practice, live observation and experience on the one hand and study on the other.

We have already noted that, as regards method, Alain makes the same case. Here again is what he says:

It is we, Subsidiary Gods, who have been entrusted with creation; thanks to us, if we are vigilant gods, the world will one day be created. So, my friends, pass without stopping through the midst of the Sleep Traffickers; and if they stop you, tell them that you are not looking for a system or a bed . . .

The Sleep Traffickers of that era killed Socrates, but Socrates is not dead; everywhere that free human beings exchange views, Socrates comes and sits among them, smiling and putting his finger to his lips. Socrates is not dead; Socrates is not old. People say many more things than they used to; but they know very little more; and they have almost all forgotten, even though they often mutter it in their dreams, the most important thing, that every idea becomes untrue immediately we are satisfied with it . . .

So never forget, my friends, that it is not at all about finding your bed, and at last getting some rest. Do not forget that systems, arguments, theories, maxims, ideas, books too, plays, conversations, as well as commentaries, imitations, adaptations, summaries, developments, translations, and everything that fills your student years, all that is only preparation, exercise . . .

So forget what I have said, it is only words, and work at seeing the world. . .

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Translated from the French by Jean Burrell

### Notes

1. The collection *Vigiles de l'esprit* is out of print. It should not be too difficult to locate Alain's *Propos* in the two volumes of the collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade' (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).

### Reference

- Finkelkraut, Alain (2000) 'La révolution culturelle à l'école', in Michel Jarrety (ed.) *Propositions pour les enseignements littéraires*, pp. 91–6. Paris: PUF.