



Share with you an inspiring speech by Barry Schwartz

Source: http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/barry_schwartz_on_our_loss_of_wisdom.html

The speech lasts for 21 minutes

The scripts of the speech, both in Chinese and in English, are saved in the folder of teachers' reading 9-3-2011.

Our loss of wisdom: moral will and moral skill

In his inaugural address, Barack Obama appealed to each of us to give our best as we try to extricate ourselves from this current financial crisis. But what did he appeal to? He did not, happily, follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, and tell us to just go shopping. Nor did he tell us, "Trust us. Trust your country. Invest, invest, invest." Instead, what he told us was to put aside childish things. And he appealed to virtue. Virtue is an old-fashioned word. It seems a little out of place in a cutting-edge environment like this one. And besides, some of you might be wondering, what the hell does it mean?



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If you run an organization you should be sure that none of the jobs -- none of the jobs -- have job descriptions like the job descriptions of the janitors. Because the truth is that any work that you do that involves interaction with other people is moral work. And any moral work depends upon practical wisdom.

And, perhaps most important, as teachers, we should strive to be the ordinary heroes, the moral exemplars, to the people we mentor. And there are a few things that we have to remember as teachers. One is that we are always teaching. Someone is always watching. The camera is always on. Bill Gates talked about the importance of education and, in particular, the model that KIPP was providing. "Knowledge is power." And he talked about a lot of the wonderful things that KIPP is doing to take inner-city kids and turn them in the direction of college.



I want to focus on one particular thing KIPP is doing that Bill didn't mention. That is that they have come to the realization that the single most important thing kids need to learn is character. They need to learn to respect themselves. They need to learn to respect their schoolmates.



They need to learn to respect their teachers. And, most important, they need to learn to respect learning. That's the principle objective. If you do that, the rest is just pretty much a coast downhill. And the teachers: the way you teach these things to the kids is by having the teachers and all the other staff embody it every minute of every day.

Obama appealed to virtue. And I think he was right. And the virtue I think we need above all others is practical wisdom, because it's what allows other virtues -- honesty, kindness, courage and so on -- to be displayed at the right time and in the right way. He also appealed to hope. Right again. I think there is reason for hope. I think people want to be allowed to be virtuous.

In many ways, it's what TED is all about. Wanting to do the right thing in the right way for the right reasons. This kind of wisdom is within the grasp of each and every one of us if only we start paying attention. Paying attention to what we do, to how we do it, and, perhaps most importantly, to the structure of the organizations in which we work, so as to make sure that it enables us and other people to develop wisdom rather than having it suppressed.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

