

Higher Education: Ends and Means

By Charles M. Perry

A condensation from the new book, *The Multidimensional Society*,
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THE advance of knowledge and of criticism has destroyed the old landmarks in higher education, or seriously discredited them. Fact, method, and authority have dissolved in a cosmopolitan flood.

The situation is similar to that in Athens when the ancient local mores and dogmas had been brought into question by the influx of population from the ends of the known earth. Men began to wonder what virtue was and whether it could be taught and what justice was. Socrates and Plato both tried to present an answer. Today again the great need in higher education is for men who can perform in some measure the function of the Socratic school.

Up to the early nineteenth century, America had its supposedly established facts to teach, its accepted authorities to revere, and in general a social and religious outlook that had few challengers. But with the advent of new opportunities for individual expression (to make fortunes, to gain political and forensic distinction, to enter the arts) a new era in higher education came upon the country.

New social classes were now demanding a new kind of training, and if they could not get such training in the colleges they would leave the college high and dry. Eliphalet Nott, president of Union College, early saw the need of popular courses in the higher institutions. Francis Wayland, president of Brown, published an essay on higher education in 1842 in which he urged more practical courses; in 1850 he presented to his board a report along the same line which became historic. A little later Charles W. Eliot established the German elective system at Harvard and President Gilman introduced it at Johns Hopkins. From those centers it spread rapidly over the country.

Though the elective system might promote the interest of higher scholarship in a graduate school, it did not have that effect in the numerous undergraduate colleges in which it was soon established. With the average student it loosened all bonds and left him on his own responsibility without the knowledge or insight to exercise his freedom. Though this situation had to come in the development of human experience, such a state of affairs posed problems which still have to be solved.

The plight of higher learning in America today is well presented by President

Robert M. Hutchins—however unacceptable his solution may be considered.

Preeminently the colleges and universities, according to Hutchins, are cursed by a love of money. Not being able to stand on their own merits in this respect they try to make good in terms of their environment. State institutions must offer what will appeal to the legislature, and must avoid teaching, researches and activities that will frighten that body. Endowed institutions must always keep an ear open to the wealthy men who are making out their wills. And all institutions have to allure students in order to get fees. Under such conditions no college or university can follow good educational policy.

NOT far behind the curse inflicted by the love of money is that coming from a distorted notion of democracy. The idea that all members of society should have higher education indiscriminately hinders a close adaptation of offerings to needs and pulls standards down to the level of the lowest. The overwhelming influence of trustees is a further outcome of the same distortion. Members of governing boards, though they have never given consideration to an educational problem and have often never even been in college, are considered authorities in the management of higher education. Their educational ideas may belong to the period before the American Revolution—or to the countries of Mussolini and Hitler; but such ideas are nevertheless granted authority.

Akin to the undue power of board members is the influence of alumni. Alumni can demand that the whole college program be subordinated to athletic interests, that students and faculty be dragged into contributing money to a half-million dollar stadium, that they themselves be accepted as final arbiters of educational policies. This prostitution of higher education means that all the agencies of such work are drawn into unlimited social inter-action, with no protection accorded to university dimensions as such.

More significant than the external conditions before noted are the internal conditions. Inside the institutions the faculties themselves have worked for material progress in the sense of piling up great accumulations of data and securing voluminous publication. The order of

talent required (even in the more abstruse natural science experiments) once the method is determined, is that of a trained animal. And the publications resulting evince neither style, humor, nor speculative vision.

Out of this obsession with material progress comes an anti-intellectual attitude among both faculties and students. On many campuses the man who insists on thinking is thought queer and is pointed at knowingly as he goes down the street. Furthermore the students are often so trained in taking factual notes that they do not know what thinking is and are afraid to take courses that have the evil reputation of requiring thought. Sometimes students drilled in facts think that thinking is a fantastic, irrelevant thing that anyone can do easily. The latter attitude is shown in the story of a girl who, when asked why she was failing in philosophy, admitted that she ought to do well in it since it consisted of "nothing but thinking."

One of the worst effects of this kind of teaching is that upon the professions. The professions are simply a continuation of this fact-learning process carried to an extreme specialization. All possible details in every possible division of the subject are taught as if the student could never be depended upon to unearth any facts for himself in actual practice. All the tricks of the trade are imparted in special courses as if the prospective practitioner could not be expected to devise any tricks of his own when he faces new situations. The result is a complete divorce between professional work and inventive imagination. Even more profound and disastrous is the separation of professional work from any creative artistry or social thinking.

The trouble with this educational situation is that it constitutes a trackless, directionless expanse. Every point of reference is swept out of position as soon as this attitude is assumed. Out of this confusion a real educational policy must attempt to build in the student a differentiated, valued, and motivated experience.

A differentiated experience means one containing many carefully observed samenesses and differences and the variations between them. Every determination in space-time is made with reference to axes. In describing the physical boundaries of a cotton patch, for instance, one

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would indicate that the area starts eighty rods north of a certain east-and-west township or section line, proceeds north-northeast eighty rods, thence south to said township or section line, thence north-west to point of beginning. Leave out the axes and all would be confusion.

When it comes to qualitative discriminations the same thing is true. In the class of "horse" there is a series from zero horsiness to the perfect idea of horse; so there is another series from zero donkeyness to the perfect idea of donkey; and "mule" is on a certain diagonal between these series at a certain qualitative distance from the zero point. The same is true for all qualitative similarities and distinctions: for the mixing of colors; the breeding of grapefruit; for all things, in fact, in heaven and earth. *A differentiated experience, then, is a vast dimensional system.*

Now what is valuation? *Valuation brings appraisal into the system.* System is a multiple dimension. Valuation is the determination of the place of a given position or dimension in that multiple dimension. It is the *judgment*, without which no man may be said to be truly educated. What place does the breeding of a mule or a grapefruit have in the building of a fortune? What place does the mixing of color have in the production of a painting? What place does mule-breeding, or painting, itself have in a developing society? *Valuation is the clarifying of a complex, qualitative dimensional scheme.*

But differentiation and valuation may exist without any commanding drive. Where does motivation come into the picture? To understand motivation one must realize that in addition to the more explicit dimensions there is a dimension from chaos to organism. *With the motivated student, differentiation and valuation are not lowered on that scale to intellectual indifference nor raised to complete mysticism; they are placed at the point of maximum vitality. At that point the universe of dimensional possibility is in some measure made explicit. Exploring with his imagination the linear paths of extension the individual anticipates potential emergents (or new dimensions).*

The question is, how can differentiation, valuation, and motivation be achieved in our institutions of higher education?

Several experiments have been tried during the last few years to accomplish the desired results. The one standing nearest to the existing system is that of the orientation course. It does, indeed, stimulate some differentiation and a measure of in-

cidental valuation; but it lacks motivation, and therefore leaves the personality undeveloped. To accomplish its purpose it must be incorporated in a more complete program.

A further plan long since inaugurated to introduce a sense of value into higher education is to make professional students and students devoted to practical subjects go over into the liberal arts college either to take several years of preliminary work or to take a few specified courses concurrently with their major work. The objection to this plan is that the work is taken as a task, is not properly motivated, is not properly coordinated with the major work, and is handled by instructors who are often not much in sympathy with the major work or its teachers. Such a plan provides a certain artificial element of valuation without cultivating differentiation or drive. A real solution awaits the coming of a more integrated system.

As soon as the need of unification was realized proposals were made to go back to some golden age when unity was supposed to have prevailed. Because of the absence of distracting material and problems and because of the presence of unquestioned authority, students in this or that remote past are supposed to have had a well integrated and directed experience. But, in the first place, there is some doubt whether such a condition ever existed in the perfection imagined. Again, it was without question attended by superstition, tyranny, unsanitary living, and the black death. And finally, the methods of such primitive time would not apply to the complex problems of the present.

SO close to the return to the golden age that it seems almost identical with it comes the program of Robert M. Hutchins. Sensing the formlessness of present-day higher education and rightly feeling the need of unity President Hutchins goes back to a time when coherence seemed to prevail. It is true that he states that he is not urging any particular metaphysics but he tends to go back to the romantic past for the metaphysics that he advances and his general tenor is to stress unity *as such* to the ignoring of the multitudinous details which lead to it. It is consequently fair to say that he is the advocate of an abstract metaphysics.

President Hutchins would overcome the limitless mixture and uncertainty of higher learning by first confining the curriculum from the beginning of the junior year in high school to the beginning of the junior year in the university to so-called "general education." This general education is to cover subjects that deal with the common elements of human nature. These subjects are (1) the classics; (2) books necessary to the understanding of some particular subjects; (3) gram-

mar, rules of reading, rhetoric, and logic; and (4) mathematics. The facts of these studies are supposed to be so settled that time will not be wasted in premature discussion and consequent uncertainty. This curriculum is expected to form the student's character on a firm and sure basis. In the university proper, no research is to be carried on for its own sake, although the professors are to have a reasonable interest in research; students are to learn useful routines from technical institutes; and a hierarchy of values gained from metaphysics is to be taught. Off the campus, magnifying the break between education and research, research institutes are to be established having little connection with the university.

Such a plan is not without value. So far as it encourages the instituting of well organized survey courses it may be considered good. So far as it discourages over-sophistication and smartness in youth it serves a useful purpose. So far as it gives directions and supplies a knowledge of values it is good. And there may be other goods accruing from it. But, the real question is whether the problem of stabilizing a highly functional experience can be solved by a method of segregation—whether such partitions of experience as are set up can really hold.

The resort to metaphysics is good but much depends on the metaphysics. *If metaphysics is taken as an activity to determine, out of common sense and scientific fact, progressively more adequate patterns of experience it is a part of every healthy personality.* It may if so understood include the logical limits of such a progression; but it does not set them up as ikons to be worshipped. *Such a metaphysics is the breath of life of all education.*

The other kind of metaphysics, however, that sets up organic unity as if it were a self-sufficient thing, is not a help but a menace. It cultivates a sentimental retreat from the problems of practical life; it encourages clerical ranting upon unity; and, as Dewey has suggested in his criticism of Hutchins' position, it provides a rationalization of tyranny. Furthermore, whether any hierarchy of values derived from metaphysics can be accepted in such a mechanical manner is extremely doubtful. Directions and values must indeed be found—but in the open universe, and not in a closed system.

Meiklejohn's Experimental College constitutes another instance of solving the problem of higher learning by the study of selected civilizations. As it was set up at Wisconsin, the experiment involved segregation. The college, set up as a separate institution on the campus, perhaps suffered from the fact that its students were considered "guinea pigs" by other students, by the faculty, and by themselves. Briefly stated the idea was for the students to study one civilization and

(with certain necessary exceptions) to center everything else, especially the study of American civilization, around that interest. There is no doubt but that the teaching method involved has merits. It creates interest; it furnishes direction; it often has stimulated action; and it could be used in some measure in any type of institution. It must be confessed, however, that it has a hot-house atmosphere, that, though the students are frequently wildly enthusiastic about it, their interest is somewhat esoteric and sentimental. Differentiation is not wide enough, valuation is rose-tinted, action is likely to be circumscribed.

Much more to be depended upon are direct attacks on the whole educational front. Of such attacks the one on subject matter is first. The widest range of material can be taught, as wide as human need. Any subject from wood carving to Greek may be made the vehicle of educational effort. The second attack is on the method of handling subject matter. Each item needs to be carried through the whole scale of differentiation, valuation, and motivation. Each subject must accordingly be responsibly taught—to the end of arousing interest, clarifying directions, making comparison of values, and inciting to action.

If chemistry is taught it should be presented seriously as chemistry but at the same time in such a manner as to encourage originality, to place the subject in the whole of human experience, to decide what is worth doing, and to start the students on it. If physics is being presented it should first be taught as physics but with a consciousness of the far-reaching speculative bearing of present-day physical theory, of its relation to philosophy in general and to all cultural concerns, and of the numerous possibilities of action. Engineering should not be a rule of thumb to be taught to morons but one of the most important functions of society as a whole. With its bearing on conservation and community planning its possibilities are stupendous. The students need to be familiarized with these social bearings and shown its relation to them. Engineering in this light is not merely vocational; it is not necessarily the willing servant of the exploiters.

Neither is Business Administration merely the imparting of useful routines. It is the illumination of an important field of human activities. The student needs to be taught business method and practice so thoroughly that he can command the respect of the masters of business and, in addition, his original gifts should be elicited. The map of human activity ought to be made plain, the great individual and social ends made clear, and the desire to participate honorably in the changing world impressed. The aim of a college of Business Administration, in

short, should be the production of "business statesmen."

So also the teaching of journalism should be more than training in smart knacks and a sophisticated attitude. It is in the first instance, the inculcation of the distinctive facts and principles of the profession. It may involve the direction of a reasonable amount of practice based on those facts and principles. Such motivation as can be attached to these performances may be on the credit side of the ledger. Subsidiary courses in other departments, schools, and colleges will be employed, but in all such cases strong integrating efforts have to be made by some instructor to insure that the subject matter of such courses may not lie inert in the mind of the student. Perspectives and values can then be developed and, finally, dynamic human character evolved. And what has been said here of certain courses and curricula can be said of every course and curriculum in an institution of higher learning.

With every course, however vocational, made into a vehicle of the whole educational process, vocationalism would lose its terror. And it is well that this is true, for the teacher, the preacher, and the writer as well as the lawyer and the dentist must ultimately coordinate their education with their jobs. With every subject vocational and cultural at the same time the important business of the educationist is to determine objectives and arrange curricula to realize them. Not only the acknowledged vocational subjects must be directed toward practical ends but all the liberal arts subjects should be subjected to practical curriculum-making. There should be no "abstract culture" for a leisure class.

In keeping with this spirit, however, there will be no indoctrination even for democracy. The student will not be encouraged to look back to a golden age of simplicity when a functional society was supposed to exist nor forward to a bright utopia either in heaven or upon the earth when all human relations will be rational. He will be taught rather the use of a humane and rational method to determine means and ends in a realistic world.

With these changes in subject matter and method, administrative changes should occur. The existing credit system must be destroyed root and branch. Treating each course as a certain number of hours attendance at lectures, selected without sense of value, reduces the subject to lifeless stuff to be forgotten as soon as the examination is over and the credits are safely recorded at the registry office. If ever a method was successfully planned to devitalize education that is it. It turns experience into a lot of little unassimilated lumps, and eventually even the lumps disappear. The remedy for such a condition is some kind of examination that will test the experience of

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the student as a whole as modified by the work done in the course or curriculum. One way that has been tried is that of the comprehensive examination. That type of examination involves trying the powers of inference, the capacity to apply the new knowledge to the wide world, in fact testing the total reaction of the person who has taken the course. Questions cannot be asked smartly and at random but have to be carefully adjusted to determine, in regard to the functional whole of experience what the student has gained from the study under consideration.

The end sought is the creation of well-integrated active personality. To carry out such a program requires a professional examining body that keeps in close touch with the conduct of the course, knows what ought to be acquired from it in functional terms, and yet can give a degree of impersonality to the transaction.

With such changes departmental barriers should be broken down. University departments have been formed completely on the investigational pattern. The material involved has demanded an ever more esoteric refinement of technique. With such refinement the members of different departments have grown farther and farther apart. Students specializing in one department gradually come to despise the work of other departments; they come to live in little hermetically sealed cells. The walls of those cells must be broken and the student induced to live in a larger world where he can function as a human being with innumerable values to choose from.

To keep the more gifted individuals from losing interest and becoming listless another factor is needed. Motivation must be supplied and opportunity afforded them to do their best. To meet this need President Aydelotte and his followers have introduced honors courses. Such courses are open during the junior and senior years in college to students who have a certain degree of originality and have reached a comparatively high level of attainment in their earlier work. Once they are admitted to such honors they are allowed a higher degree of freedom, have the privilege of associating more freely with their instructors, and carry on independent projects of some magnitude. This type of organization coupled with comprehensive examinations seems to be the best thing yet devised to cultivate the intellectual and ethical vitality of the student in a predominantly functional educational system. Wide and accurate differentiation, just valuation, and dynamic personality would be the legitimate fruits of such a plan.

In addition to modifications in subject matter, method, and administrative setup, recourse must also be had to the contagion of vital, imaginative personality. The university still exists when an eager

student sits on one end of the log with a Mark Hopkins on the other. Example of active interest on the part of the instructor and obvious orientation on his part with reference to permanent values have more to do with successful education than any other factor. New plans for the higher learning will accordingly include measures for recruiting and training instructional staffs. Nothing can come closer to democratic statesmanship than such efforts. In the quality of the instructor all the necessary elements are centered—especially that of motivation.

This brings us to a consideration of the university as a whole. *Its characteristic activities fall into a familiar triad: scholarship, teaching (the multiple dimension just described), and administration.*

SCHOLARSHIP is the utterly colorless determination of fact and principle. If it handles value it handles it merely as fact. Teaching is the integration of personality as shown before. It uses the findings of research in building the concrete and motivated whole of experience. Administration intersects the dimensions of research and teaching at every point, thus supplying their unity. It in turn has its own distinctive function or line of variation. It holds together scholarship and teaching, the numerous persons involved in each, and attempts to make both serve the goal of the university. With loose administration the factors tend to fall apart; with more compact and vital administration they are unified and brought into dynamic relation.

In this connection it is helpful to consider the question of Hutchins' research institutes, which were to be off the campus. Such an arrangement would fall into the same dimensional structure as the one here presented, especially if the same administration covered both the university and the research institutions. That is to say, the abstract research element is present; the teaching function is right-angular to it; and the business of coordinating them is a third dimension. The separation, however, between research and teaching tends to eliminate the numerous resultants that come from a combination of the two. Cross fertilization would be lost: teaching would tend to become a mere imparting of fact, and research would be apt to take on a more abstract and impersonal character than it usually has. All that has been written here about valuation and motivation would be largely lost. And the same comment applies to any educational proposal that solves the problem by the segregation of scholarship and teaching.

The plan here presented has the following advantages. Scholarship, teaching, and administration form one dimensional system with the possibility of innumerable compromises or resultants between them. *The scholar should not be*

a complete recluse but must know some of the human goals of his activities in both teaching and administration. The teacher should not be a mere Charlie McCarthy, repeating what he has learned by rote from his own teachers or books; but instead within limits a scholar in his own right and also in a measure an administrator. The administrator likewise should be to a certain extent an active participant in the scholarly and teaching fields. *The university administrator must in fact be a functionary of the university as such. He can not be a mere business executive (necessary and valuable though such an executive might be in his own particular field of experience) superimposed upon a situation of which he knows little and with which he has no natural points of contact.* One may say that each person who functions in this ideal university undertaking is a resultant lying somewhere between the axes of the dimensional triad here presented. The thing that gives each his distinctive character is the closeness of his activity to one of the axes.

It should not be thought, however, that a plan of this sort has no possible dangers.

There is the ever present danger that with the breaking down of the barriers between the several dominant dimensions of an institution their respective activities will flow together into one indistinguishable flood having little social direction. Here the dimensional principle must be asserted again in its strictest meaning. *Though the philologist becomes a teacher, or in some degree an administrator, he has back of him as his line of reference the distinctive science of philology to preserve his intellectual integrity. Though the sociologist makes concessions to the needs of his students he must maintain an allegiance to the severest methods of testing the subject matter to keep from floating with the tide.* And the same is true of the other sciences and the arts.

The danger of ignoring the distinctive differences within these various fields of scholarship and teaching also is ever present. This danger is indeed intensified by the incorporation of the so-called "research subjects" in exact science with those in philosophy, social sciences, and literature—whose methods and ends are necessarily different. Scholarship in government and literature, for instance, is a dead thing if confined to a "laboratory study" of classic texts and case histories; it becomes alive and functional only as it asserts leadership in the affairs and taste of its own time. One social statesman or creative artist in these fields is more hopeful for humanity than a dozen narrow "specialists" buried in the dust of past ages. Such fields of experience, in particular, need to be protected from the imposition of educational "standards" that recognize only one aspect of a multidimensional subject.

The ideal scholar and teacher in such

fields would combine in himself scholarship in the philosophy, history, and literature of his subject, participation in contemporary trends and problems, and a contagious enthusiasm for the good in the new as well as in the old. If this is too much to expect, human capacities being what they are, a wise administration must see that in the faculty staff as a whole all of these dimensional potentialities are represented and given the respect and rewards each is due.

Administration also has its own distinctive and irreducible line of action by which its success must be measured. Dependable dimensional structure makes function possible, and, in turn function guarantees the axes of orientation.

It must not be forgotten that the dimension of administration in a university serves to unify not only the dimensions within the university pattern. It must also unify many dimensions of practical life like business and labor and bring them into harmonious understanding and action with the university undertakings. Administration should thus coordinate the university with the whole life of the region that is being served. At the same time it must insist that the dimensions of the university itself be strictly maintained or it can no longer serve.

In such an attempt to revamp higher education in America no vested rights can be admitted that are not able to justify themselves in the form of results. This would apply to education itself as well as to society as a whole. There are no elite except the elite that can show by accomplishment their right to exist. There is no safe, isolated culture that does not belong to all classes of society if they will and can take it. Only with such an educational structure can the multidimensional society ever be made a practical reality instead of a philosophic dream.

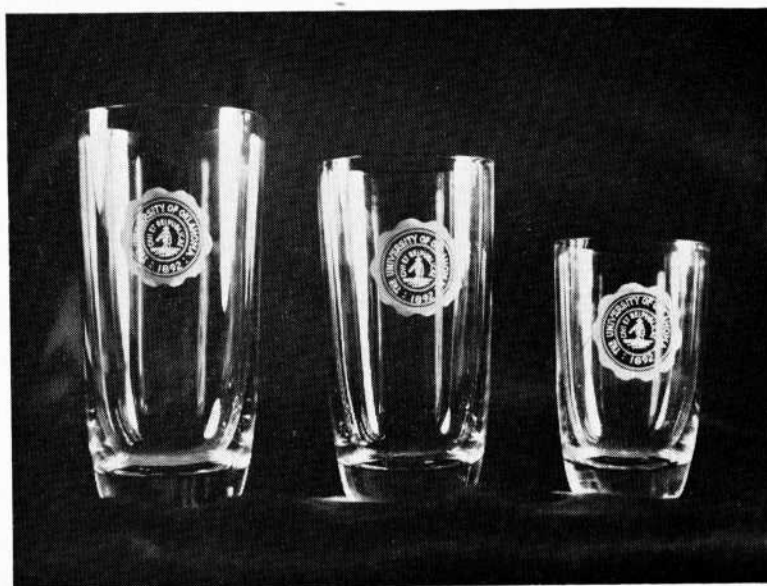
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Comfort loses chaplain post

E. N. Comfort, dean of the Oklahoma School of Religion, has been removed as chaplain at Central State Hospital by the State Board of Affairs. State officials of the American Legion sought Mr. Comfort's removal, reportedly because of "communistic" tendencies.

The Board of Affairs announced that it did not find any convincing evidence that Mr. Comfort had shown any sympathy toward communistic principles, but that it felt the Legion had a right to make a recommendation on the chaplain post because of the fact that the Legion sponsored the building of the chapel at the state hospital.

The *Oklahoma Daily* bitterly criticized Mr. Comfort's removal from the position, charging that he was being penalized for upholding the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech.



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