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## Dialectical Humanism, Ideology and the Institutions of Higher Learning

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**DIALECTICAL HUMANISM, IDEOLOGY \*  
AND THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING \*\***

INTRODUCTION

Modern institutions of higher learning (universities) in the West are the children of Enlightenment and as such they represent certain values and attitudes towards life. The Enlightenment tradition opposed the magical, superstitious elements in the West and elevated the "rational" as the royal road to knowledge and proper living. It was the independent thinking promoted in the universities which disclosed the oppressive nature of good many socio-political and religious organizations. However, increasingly the above-noted emphasis on rationality in the institutions of higher learning became an exclusive emphasis on technical rationality without raising any questions about the intelligibility of modern life or about what the universities themselves were doing. Modernization, the product of rational-technical approach became a "sacred cow." As the idea of modernization spread rapidly in the developing nations during this century, the universities have become the secular temples where the god of progress is worshipped especially in the developing nations (Berger, p. 5).

The modern universities not only have become gigantic, but also are increasingly involved in modern elitism, directly or indirectly. Universities are the main suppliers of technologically sophisticated labor force for the industrial system, a factor which raises moral questions about the proper role of a university. Moreover, the nature of modern life is such that without the

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\* The term ideology is used for any idea (set of ideas) which is held dogmatically as valid without being open to discussion and empirical evidence.

\*\* Though the article deals mainly with the social sciences in the Western universities since the author has had first-hand information only on them, it is expected that the article will have applicability to non-Western academic institutions beyond the social sciences.

help of modern universities, the political, economic and cultural dictators of the world cannot control the people involved. Political dictators and multinational corporations alike are depending upon the scientists for their domination. Thus modern universities have moved away, intentionally or unintentionally, from the original goal of enlightening and liberating the people. Most of the scientists are willing to sell their expertise to the highest bidder in the name of what is known as "value-free science." While most universities claim to be value-free in their basic approach, they are deeply involved in the ideologies and illusions of their environments. At the same time, more and more leaders of our time are coming from the universities. So it is important that we take a closer look at our institutions of higher learning without assuming that what is taking place in the universities are rational. The author is using the conceptual framework called "dialectical humanism" to carry out the above-noted critical examination. Dialectical humanism\*\*\* as an approach has two parts to it—the dialectical and the humanistic.

#### DIALECTICAL DIMENSION OF LIFE AND THE UNIVERSITIES

According to a dialectical understanding, reality is in a dynamic flux. Universities are no exception. The universities (which used to be a force of liberation) are no longer what they used to be. However, this does not mean that they are nothing but a force of oppression either at present. The role of dialectical approach is to find out in what respects the universities are liberating and in what respects oppressive. A major emphasis of a dialectical model is in developing dialogue between the various parties. Dialogue is particularly important in this day and age. One of the main features of modern life is that we live in a pluralistic world (culturally, politically, economically, etc.). However, we have not learned to live peacefully with people of different cultures and political organizations. It is crucial for our very survival that we learn to develop a dialogue with others rather than approaching them with an attitude of confrontation and proselytizing. This is particularly important in the universities where people from different cultures, backgrounds, etc., meet and expect to explore various fields of study. In fact, if the spirit of dialogue is not cultivated in the universities we have very little reason to hope that the above-noted spirit will survive in other areas of modern life because universities have become the secular temples of our time.

Modern Western universities have incorporated the ideology of competition and success. Every university is competing to be number one in the world or nation or in the region. There is nothing wrong with competition or

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\*\*\* Though the major components of the framework were discussed in a recent article by the author in *Organon*, still pertinent components in relation to the universities are discussed here.

being successful. However, when success becomes an end in itself, an end which justifies any means, then it is an ideology. The ideology of success is most conspicuous in the sports the universities promote. The top basket players, for example, have become the "stars" of some of the universities. Top players bring not only fame but also money, for their universities and the universities are showing willingness to cut the corners academically and morally for these stars. And these stars are under tremendous pressure to perform to the extent they are willing to do anything to succeed. Increasing use of drugs and violence in sports is directly related to the underlying ideology of success in the culture.

One of the dialectical ironies of growth and success is that as an institution or a nation becomes larger and larger, it becomes more, not less, vulnerable. As gigantic institutions of our time, the modern universities can not remain as giants without massive help especially from the government and corporations. Thus, often the universities are faced with the choice between moral integrity and declining economic support. In fact, the above-noted dilemma is the central moral challenge faced by individuals and institutions alike. The socio-economic implications of moral integrity is explicitly clear when we deal with specific issues. For example, for a university to stand for racial equality is to take a loss in investment in South Africa; to take a strong stand for peace is to lose research money from the military or to stand for health is to lose research contracts from tobacco industries. The modern universities must recognize the dialectical situation they are in; on the one hand, they are deeply involved in the ideology of success and the politics of confrontation; on the other they have the power and the resources to change the situation drastically in the world.

The dialectics not only involves a dialogue, but also the notion of dialectical partnership of seemingly contradictory phenomena in a greater synthesis of life. For example, according to the dialectical model, freedom of will is not contradictory to the notion of causal determinism. It is true that, given a certain circumstance, one may not be free to do certain things, but that does not mean that he/she is totally helpless either in that situation. If one can not help economically, he/she can help in many other ways. The challenge according to the dialectical model is to see in what ways one is free and in what ways determined. Similarly, our sense of wonder is not contradictory to our sense of rationality; one dimension does not negate the other. After all as human beings we have both senses. The question is how both dimensions can be held as dialectical partners in life. Our idealism and realism, theoretical imagination and empirical observation, sense of egalitarianism and of excellence, sense of independence and interdependence, etc. can be partners (not opponents) in a dynamic creative openness to life because life has a dynamic thrust to itself. Our universities can be a place of inspiring idealism (vision) and sobering realism at the same time. When an ideal is not applicable in its totality in a given situation, questions can be raised as to

what extent it is applicable and what can be done to make it more applicable in the situation. We do not need to make ideological camps as "visionaries" or as "realists". In fact, in real life, it is a vision (ideal) which helps us to raise practical questions and it is the practicality of an ideal which keeps the spirit of idealism alive. In the universities we can feel the agony of poverty or of oppression and still come to empirically valid conclusions about poverty or oppression.

The spirit of a dialectical model is one of compromise, reconciliation, and synthesis as well as of competition, confrontation, challenge, and negation. Universities are the place where we can enshrine the above-noted spirit of the model. To recognize and cultivate the dialectical spirit has profound implications not only to the universities but also to the society. For example, the idea of free enterprise is not inconsistent with the idea of communal ownership. In fact, in capitalist countries, the lakes, roads, parks, government buildings, etc. are owned by the people; they are considered too important for private ownership! In socialist countries many items are owned by individuals. So in reality there is no inherent, irreconcilable conflict between private and public ownerships. Perhaps even more important to recognize is the fact that the evils of free enterprise can not be solved by public ownership (socialism) and vice versa. The real questions are to what extent what kind of private or public ownership is appropriate under what conditions and why. The universities are the logical place where such questions can be fruitfully raised. It is important to keep in mind that before we can actually develop a dialogue with others we need to discuss about dialogue in general as well as particular dialogues. That is why the universities have a crucial role to play in developing dialogues in our modern complex societies. It is the role of universities to open the eyes of the people involved to the creative possibilities before them.

The dialectical model challenges us to think that life does not have to be a game in which one party's victory is the other's loss; on the contrary, life can be viewed and lived as a dialogue in which both parties could gain and one party's loss is also the other's loss, as partners. Let us not forget that whatever else the one who looks at life as a game may win, he/she can not have self-respect or moral integrity. To look at life as a creative dialogue is to accept one's responsibility to look for creative solutions to our problems. Definitely such a view of life is helpful in improving our relationship with ourselves and others. In this day and age of nuclear confrontation, it's imperative that we explore models such as dialectical models. We do not come to a nuclear confrontation without an underlying ideology of confrontation. It is the role of social science to disclose the ideology of confrontation behind the nuclear weapons which the natural science has created. And we need to diffuse the ideology of confrontation if we are to prevent the nuclear bombs from exploding.

Dialectical models do not negate confrontation as such. There are

ideologies and situations which must be confronted not only academically, but also socio-politically. Ideologies such as sexism, militarism, racism, political oppression, etc. must be confronted. However, according to dialectical models we can confront such ideologies without creating a counter-ideology. To create an ideology to oppose another one is to develop a vicious circle of ideologies. The realization that the extremism of the opponents is partly a product of one's own extremism can be a real eye-opening experience with far-reaching implications. To show the ideological entanglements of the modern world may be the significant role modern universities from the smaller nations can play, since the super powers are often too involved in the ideologies themselves.

A dialogue with another person is not as simple as it sounds; it can easily bring the worst fears of both parties to the forefront. The art of dialogue is to bring the best out of the other. To bring the best out of the other, one needs to give his/her best. However, giving the best is not a matter of trying to create a good impression about oneself. The art of giving the best goes deeper than a public relations job. It is in being able to care for, respect and forgive the other that we give our best. This is what happens in a good interpersonal relationship. We can give the best and trust for the best at the personal and national levels. To bring the best out of the other we need to assume that the other one really has a greatness of his/her own. In other words, the greatness of the other must be taken seriously. In my judgement, dialectical humanism is particularly suited for this task. However, in an ideological environment, nothing good is attributed to the "opponents." The universities must show that the so-called opponents are not devoid of good qualities and that we can appeal to those good qualities in our interactions with them.

Often in our one-sided ideological view, we tend to become blind to the dialectical dimensions of life (personal and social). We can study women or Blacks or the Third World nations, not only as victims of oppression, but also as oppressors in their own right. For example, the Third World countries which were victims of foreign oppression practiced oppression of their own within their borders. To consider them exclusively as victims is to look at the situation ideologically as well as to confuse frameworks with conclusions. Similarly, the Western cultures have had their imperialistic thrust in the world; but that is not the whole story. They also have had a thrust of personal freedom and dignity in the world as Ellul notes (1978, p. 17). It is ideological to consider a culture or an institution exclusively from a one-sided perspective. Similarly we can not say categorically that revolution is good or conservative thinking is evil (or vice versa). In every society there are things to be conserved as well as things to be challenged. Neither can we say all religions are conservative by nature. There are prophetic religions which were the foundations of social revolutions. In recent political revolutions in Phillipines, South Africa, etc., religion has supported the revolutions.

It is equally important to recognize that revolutions do not have to be violent as Gandhi and others have taught. It is part of a university's role to explore the above noted possibilities and increase the creative options for the people involved liberating them from the ideological entanglements of their environments.

The dialectical insight is that as we put greater and greater emphasis on one dimension of life, the need for the other dimension(s) becomes increasingly clear, yet increasingly unable to fulfill the needs. For example, as a culture takes care of its material needs of the people, its non-material needs become clear. But to go on emphasizing exclusively the material needs is to consolidate the materialistic tendencies. According to Sorokin the Western world for the most part has been taking care of its general material needs ignoring the non-material ones. As Schumacher notes people are destroyed by the inner conviction of uselessness and no amount of economic growth can compensate for such losses (p. 161). Regardless of what the nature of reality is in the ultimate sense, the human beings have material and non-material needs. We need not only food and shelter, but also self-respect, love, justice, etc. Discussing the complimentary nature of material and non-material needs of the people Dr. Peck makes it clear that if one wants to climb the mighty mountains, he/she needs not only the tools to climb, but also the base camp(s) where he/she could rest, relax and reflect (1978, p. 166). The universities are in a position to make clear the specific nature of the needs of the people involved.

In the Western universities, the conservative thinkers view social life as a ladder emphasizing social stratification whereas the radicals think of social life as a circle emphasizing the equality of the people. According to a dialectical approach, the amazing thing is that the above-noted two perspectives can be synthesized into a unified approach. In other words, within an egalitarian perspective, functional social stratification can be encouraged and within a social stratification fundamental human equality can be accepted, in which case neither social equality nor social stratification is treated as an ideology. Similarly a bureaucracy does not have to be impersonal. A well-organized bureaucracy can be dedicated to the personal welfare of the people it serves.

Dialectical possibilities in life creates tension in real life. Increasing one's personal freedom is also increasing one's freedom to choose destruction (Bellah, p. XVI). Unless increasing one's personal freedom is balanced by an increase in his/her sense of social responsibility the personal freedom itself becomes a problem. This is a problem quite common in most of the Western nations. Increasing personal freedom which uproots the individual from his/her social world has devastating consequences. However, we do not solve the problems associated with increased personal freedom by controlling the individuals by a state or an organization. It is ideological to assume that increasing personal freedom will solve all our problems just as it is ideolo-

gical to assume that state can solve all our problems. Moreover, it is not easy to come up with the right combination of personal freedom and social control in a given situation. In fact we have to use the trial and error method to discover the combination; even then it is not an easy task. So the complex and dynamic nature of reality requires a flexible approach on our part. Ideology by nature is inflexible. University is not a place where we should promote ideology, but a place where ideologies can be discovered and exploded without losing our depth as human beings.

#### HUMANISTIC DIMENSION AND THE UNIVERSITIES

Humanistic understanding of life means that human beings have a depth which must be recognized if we are to understand people and to live a meaningful life. According to humanistic models, one of the basic roles of university is to put the students in touch with their own depth as human beings. Putting students in touch with their own depth has profound sociopolitical implications. Only when we come in touch with the depth of human beings do we develop faith in human beings as well as self-confidence in us. Only then would we be able to see the trivializations of life around us. According to humanistic models, people are the greatest resources we have in any system. If the people are depressed or unhappy, what good is the system? The quality of any social system must depend upon how well it serves the people involved. It is ideological to get totally committed to a system without any regard to what that system does to the people involved. In a university we should be able to examine various social systems in terms of their impact on the people involved; but we need a humanistic approach to do that.

A recognition of human depths has specific implications to the educational institutions of higher learning. That means the human hunger for knowledge can not be limited to facts and theories. One has a hunger for meaning, justice, beauty, integrity, love, freedom, etc. To limit human hunger just to one dimension is to diminish life. Moreover, we do not discover human depth the way we discover iron or gold, for example. In a real sense we have to cultivate the depth to discover it. What we have is a potentiality for depth. And human depth is not a simple one-dimensional phenomenon. In other words, the students need to promote their sense of wonder, joy, community, gratitude, independence, rationality, etc., if they are to discover their depth.

Recognition of human depth has implications to the way we teach the students. The latter can not be treated as little minds to be filled with facts and theories by the experts as Freire makes it clear. Education must help the students to discover their own inner depth as human beings. Thus education is always a self-discovery. For example, in discussing alienation, the students are encouraged to think of their own experiences of alienation and to see



how they overcame their own alienations, an approach which could lead to greater self-confidence. A humanistic model assumes that the students have had all sorts of creative problem-solving experiences. And the instructor with a deep sense of sensitivity towards and respect for the students can help the students to discover their own depth. Moreover, the students can be encouraged to relate their experiences with the similar experiences of fellow students. Questions can be raised why some people coped with their problems creatively while others did not do so. Thus the knowledge they gain is not simply personal in nature, but theoretical as well. Perhaps, more importantly the students learn to share with others.

Learning in modern universities is too abstract and cerebral. The assumption that we can separate our life from our learning is one of the myths of modern education. We have experts on alienation who can not relate their theories to their own experiences of alienation. In fact, they act as if they never had any experience of alienation. We have experts on poverty who not only can not relate their own experiences of poverty (not necessarily economic poverty) to their theories, but also have not even met a poor person in their life. They know the poor only as part of statistics. The role of humanistic education is not only to help the students to be more informed and creative, but also to be more sensitive, empathetic, self-confident, trusting and self-respecting. However, before they can accomplish the above-noted goals, they need to discover themselves intellectually as well as emotionally. The students and the instructors do not come to universities with empty minds. As members of a community (i.e. as Protestants or Catholics or upper or lower class people, for example) they bring their biases, hopes, fears, etc. to the school. So self-discovery must include the discovery of deep-seated, hidden and suppressed feelings too.

In order to achieve the above-noted goal, the facts and theories the instructors teach must be open to critical examination by the students. Moreover, it is important to realize that the students learn not only from the facts and theories to which they are exposed, but also from the attitudes and orientations of their instructors, as well as from the basic values the institutions stand for as Polanyi notes (p. X). In the universities we pay attention only to the expertise of the instructors. Education is more than a matter of informing the students; it is a matter of transforming the students in the light of the new informations. To be informed without being transformed by the informations is to be deformed by them, because additional informations mean greater responsibility in life.

The dialectical nature of human beings is such that he/she is rational and non-rational (emotional) at the same time. Both the rational and the non-rational (which Bellah calls "mythical") exist in a dialectical tension since an exclusive emphasis on one will create problems from the other (Bellah). Though the "mythical" is not dealt with explicitly in the universities, there are myths of rationalism and of value-free science, for example, working in

the universities. The universities must uncover such implicit myths if we are to understand modern social life. The dialectical nature of a human being is such that he/she can and must be rational as well as emotional at the same time. However, modern universities are the institutions where only the left side of the brain (the analytical side) is developed (Peck, 1983, p. 41). The development of the right side of brain can not be accomplished by having more courses taught in arts and humanities. We need to look at both arts and sciences from a different perspective which can synthesize the artistic and the scientific into a unified, living whole.

#### STUDY OF HISTORY AND THE PROCESS OF LEARNING

History can be examined within dialectical humanism in a fruitful way. In the modern universities, history, is taught as if historical facts will add up to historical generalizations, if not to laws of history. We do not realize that often the so-called facts are the creations of human beings who looked at history from their own point of view, which in turn, influenced their findings (conclusions). As Karl Marx noted, history for the most part, was written by the victors for their own advantage. I should add that the history of the victims is written on their faces and it takes empathy to read it.

Often, in the West, history is looked from an evolutionary point of view placing the Western civilizations at the top of the evolutionary ladder. To many people in the West, history seems to revolve around the West. Comte, for example, thought of human evolutionary history going through three stages with the West occupying the apex of progress. However, it should be kept in mind that the above-noted ethnocentric attitude towards history is not limited to the Western world. The first thing history should teach us is that history does not revolve around any culture. It is equally important to keep in mind that practically all cultures in the world looked at history from their own cultural point of view, a realization which can put us in fellowship with others. The realization that history does not revolve around us is important in developing a sense of appreciation of others. Secondly, history should give us a sense of historical dynamism and hope for the future. History gives us ample evidence to be flexible about life. The ups and downs of nations in history is an indication that the super-powers of today would not be the super-powers forever. Thus history can provide a sense of humility for the strong nations and a sense of historical dynamism for the weaker ones, while giving a sense of hope for all. For example, if the slaves in the ancient world could survive their ordeal, we have every reason to have hope for the future. One of the real problems of a nuclear age is that many lose their sense of hope. Learning history, according to a humanistic understanding, is not a matter of memorizing dates and events, but a matter of touching and transforming the whole being.

Teaching history has a unique role to play in our education. It is our

history which puts us in touch with our roots as a people. It is through the learning of history that we realize that we belong to a tradition. Our sense of tradition and peoplehood is important for self-respect and identity. As a leading psychiatrist makes it clear, one of the distinguishing marks of maturity of a person is the capacity to immerse oneself in tradition and at the same time being able to keep his/her sense of uniqueness (May, p. 178). However, tradition is often used as an excuse not to confront the dynamic nature of history. How to use one's tradition as a source of stability as well as a source of dynamism is part of the challenge posed by dialectical models. In the modern universities, the centres of modernization, tradition is often looked down as something opposite to progress. A sense of tradition is important not only for a better understanding of ourselves but also to develop a deep sense of gratitude towards others. For example, our modern science would not have come about had it not been for the many who paved the way for it. Unfortunately history is often taught for national self-glorification. A deepened sense of gratitude through learning history will have profound implications to our interpersonal life; definitely our attitude towards parents, grandparents and old people in general will improve considerably. The ideology of individualism and "self-made man" is partly related to our modern problems of old age, inter-generational conflict, delinquency, etc.

Teaching history must touch the dark side of our life too. As a people, we must feel not only proud and grateful, but also "ashamed" of what had happened in history. Every culture has had (still has) its outcasts. We should not explain away the history of oppression. Such dark side of our life must provoke our sense of moral sensitivity. It is this sense of moral indignation about ourselves which saves us from self-righteous arrogance as a people. It is the dialectical tension between the moral indignation (shame) and national pride which helps us to examine the modern counterparts of ancient tragic situations. Thus history becomes part of a living present, building a better future (synthesis). The tragic thing about teaching history in the universities is that it is separated from one's true self. Most of our students can study the history of colonialism without ever feeling anything about it. In fact, it is assumed (implied) that to be disturbed by such facts is to lose one's own sense of objectivity. To recognize the tragedy of colonialism has profound implications to the present and future. Many of the museums in the West have to be half empty if the tragic facts of colonialism are accepted. But on the other hand, a totally new and creative relationship can emerge between the nations!

History of other nations should promote in us a deep sense of appreciation towards them. For example, it was the Arabs who kept the Greek learning alive during the Dark Ages and gave to the West which had lost it. We owe the origin of modern alphabets to the ancient people in the Middle East. There is no self-made man or culture. He who thinks he is self-made

can not develop a sense of gratitude towards or belong to a community. History can also be used to develop our empathy towards others. For example, most of the Third World countries are going through a revolutionary phase as the developed nations of the West did a few centuries ago. The Western nations did use strong measures to overcome the crisis in which they found themselves during their revolutionary phase; yet the students who approve what their countries did, are not sympathetic to others who are in similar situations and want to use strong measures to overcome it. Developing empathy for others is not approving what they are doing; but prevents us from being moralistic, arrogant or indifferent while promoting creative thinking. Just because the Western countries used force, for example, the Third World countries do not have to use force even when the conditions are quite similar. The latter can now learn from the use of force by the former.

History teaches lessons only to those who are open to history. There are great accomplishments in history and we must raise questions as to what we can learn from them. So is the case with the great blunders in history. For example, we can raise questions about the ancient Egyptian Pharaohs who built mighty pyramids to memorialize themselves while economically destroying their country. Questions can be raised about the modern pharaohs all over the world who are destroying their countries with their mega-projects of self-glorification. As we study the ancient practice of infanticide, we can ask what the forms of modern infanticides are in a world where over 5 million children below the age of five die every year. As we examine the "sacred cows" of India, we must ask what the sacred cows of the West are in reality.

To study history from the narrow perspective of facts and laws is to miss the significance of history for the present and future. We can study about Plato or Aristotle, or Marx, or Freud, for example, as a hero (idol) who could do no wrong or as an intellectual giant who has great lessons to teach us even through his "mistakes". What we basically learn from the intellectual giants is not so much the facts and theories they gave us as the great lessons from their spirit of inquiry or sense of imagination or integrity. Though the Newtonian physics is not much of a use for the modern physicists, the spirit of Newton must be alive in our universities. So is the case with other intellectual giants too. We must learn to follow their footsteps in the spirit of inquiry, not in terms of their findings and conclusions. In fact, we can not follow their spirit of adventure without learning to look at their work critically. To consider someone's conclusions as eternally valid is non-historical in approach and as such it is an ideology. According to dialectical models we can have deep sense of appreciation towards an intellectual giant and still be critical about some specific aspects of his/her work. Ideological camps are detrimental to the very spirit of inquiry and dialogue.

By studying history, we must get an idea where we are in history and how we came to be where we are. The students must understand not only the historical events (description), but also their significance to us (Rich,

p. 173). We can not understand many of the modern problems without understanding history. For example, many of the traditional and tribal cultures were destroyed by the expanding modern industrial civilizations. It now seems increasingly clear that many of our serious problems such as pollution, destruction of the environment and militarism are inherent in the basic cultural patterns of modern industrial civilizations (Bodley). In fact, modern industrial civilizations are at a cross-road in their history now. They destroyed the extended family, yet struggling to re-build family. We are trying to overcome loneliness, yet unwilling to learn from the traditional cultures.

We can not learn from the traditional cultures until we learn to appreciate them. Many Eastern cultures have developed an inner strength which is almost unheard in the West. Though many young people are going after the "gurus" from the East (who are here for the most part to make money), the universities are not open to the Eastern philosophies to learn from them, though academic discussions about Eastern philosophies are quite common in the Western universities. In our approach to mental health, we follow almost exclusively the traditional Western methods. Why not try the Eastern techniques of relaxation? More basically why not try a different attitude and approach to life? Why not critically examine our competitive, success-oriented attitude towards life as a primary source of ever-increasing alienation and tension? Many tribal cultures have a healthy attitude towards nature. Why not examine its applicability to our modern situations? Exposing ourselves to other cultures is the best way to understand ourselves and to raise new questions about our culture. Moreover, it is in exposing to other cultures that we discover the common roots of all cultures from human depth. It is in exposing ourselves to the Eastern meditative approach to life (as opposed to a frantic, activistic, compulsive, competitive one) that we recognize our own meditative roots in history and hunger for it deep within us. And the universities are the best place where these challenging avenues can be exposed systematically in an atmosphere of academic openness. The study of history must not only help our full humanity to develop, but also encourage us to accept other cultures as part of the human family. However, learning from the weaker cultures is not easy for the powerful ones.

#### SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT AND THE UNIVERSITIES

A university reflects the culture in which it exists; but that is not the whole story. A university can reflect the best or the worst in its socio-cultural environment. More importantly, a university can transcend the culture in taking the lead in creating still better avenues of thinking and doing for the culture. However, a university can not transcend its environment without becoming aware of itself as a socio-cultural entity. Teaching of history, social sciences and humanities can fulfill such a goal. For example, there are cultures where the highest honor goes to the most self-sacrificing, whereas in

the Western world the highest honor tends to be given to the most successful or the most militant. For a culture to idealize the most militant has profound social implications; in such a culture, the models of reconciliation are seldom, if ever, explored systematically. In such a situation, it is part of a university's role to see what extent it is entangled in the ideology of militarism and what can be done about it. Confrontational approaches dominate our family, politics, economics, etc. There is very little reconciliatory attitude between management and labor, buyer and seller, teachers and students, etc. Not to explore a reconciliatory approach is to deny our ability and need to love and care for others.

Universities in the West are to a great extent cut off from the real world. For example, it is quite common for a student of poverty or crime to study his/her topics without ever meeting a poor person or a criminal. Not only the students are insulated from observing poverty, they are also not seeing the connection between their affluence and others' poverty. Most Canadians, for example, regard massive poverty of the Third World as unrelated to the pursuit of wealth and power of the developed nations (Roche, p. 21). Similar connection exists between Third World dictators and the policies of the developed world. The Third World dictators can not survive for very long without substantial military help from the developed countries. It is easy to see the explicit racism of South Africa, but it is not easy to see the implied racism of the "democratic" countries. It is even harder to see how sound economic decisions made in the West contribute to the political oppressions in other parts of the world. We live in an inter-related and inter-dependent world; and the universities must make the connections clear without hiding their heads in the sand of ethical neutrality or academic specialization. It is not an accident that history has placed the role of social criticism on the shoulders of the universities in many countries. We can not criticize the modern complex societies and institutions without a great deal of knowledge about them. Moreover, such a criticism requires the cooperation of many minds from various fields. For a university to deny the above-noted role is to lose their own creative thrust and historical mission.

Critical examination of the socio-cultural environment can not happen in a university which is not critical of itself. Critical examination must begin at home to be authentic. It is easy to criticize others, but it is very hard to criticize one-self. A university can not promote the true spirit of criticism if the critique is limited to others. In fact, a criticism of others without a critical examination of oneself can easily lead to self-glorification and propaganda. A propaganda does not have to be false. Even a set of facts can be a tool for propaganda. Carefully chosen negative facts about a nation or a culture may be a better tool for propaganda than a set of false accusations. Uncritical acceptance of the *status quo* by the students and the instructors is often related to their struggle for survival in a highly competitive world. The students, for example, learn the value of repeating what is being told (Rozak,

p. 131—132). It is not easy to criticize the mighty and the powerful; yet we have shining examples in history who did just that. We need to identify with those great souls ("prophets") if we are to be part of their spirit of adventure.

#### SPECIALIZATION IN THE UNIVERSITIES

Universities are the citadels of specialization. To be a proper scholar in this day and age of information explosion, one has to be highly specialized in his/her field (Bell, p. 40). Since the professors are increasingly finding their professional status and income directly related to greater degrees of specialization most of them not only lack the ability to offer interdisciplinary explorations (courses) but also the interest in acquiring it (Rich, p. 66; Siu, p. 12). To complicate the matter further, each field has a jargon of its own which prevents inter-disciplinary communication (Ellul, 1967, p. 132). Increasing specialization has its negative impact on the students. A dozen courses on a variety of highly specialized topics are likely to leave the students with a lot of details which they can not integrate into a meaningful, comprehensive view of life (Bell, pp. 41—42). For example, Dr. Helen Caldicott talks about her experience in medical school where she learned about nuclear radiation causing cancer, but her instructors did not connect the nuclear radiation to the political decisions of the nuclear powers (p. 16).

In the ancient times, mythology or wisdom literature or religion undertook the task of unifying the various fields for the people. In the Western world for a long time both theology and philosophy did the work of uniting the various fields. However, increasingly philosophy itself has come under the influence of more and more specialization. Theology still has a strong sense of rivalry with other fields. During the 19th century, Comte thought of sociology as the queen of sciences which could provide a unified view of life. The question of unifying the various field can not be left to one field or to one person. Integration of fields must be the work of all fields and no field should be treated as the queen or king. Specialization is here to stay, no doubt. However, in each field, the students and instructors alike must raise questions about the implications of their work to other fields. It is the implied assumption that economics or politics have nothing to say about the moral issues and vice versa, for example, which kept the education in the universities technical and narrow.

The fact that we do not tackle the interdisciplinary moral issues, does not mean that we do not have any underlying values and attitudes. In fact, increasingly specialization is a product of an underlying technocratic, rationalistic, status quo-oriented worldview. What education must accomplish is to make the underlying worldviews as well as their implications clear. Education can not help us if it does not lead to a clarification of our metaphysics (our basic convictions and worldviews—Schumacher, p. 76). The problem is that we teach science or philosophy without discussing the presuppositions behind them with the result that the presuppositions are

confused for conclusions (Schumacher, pp. 76—77). Perhaps the real danger of increasing specialization in a culture where success is glorified, is the tendency where the successful specialists become the experts on everything. The most successful physicist often becomes the advisor on politics, economics, etc. To complicate the matter further, the successful scientists often do have a vested interest in the *status quo*. We can see the idealization of the successful ones as general role models in the mass media where the movie stars are often portrayed as the experts on everything from toothpaste to dieting. Universities must explode the myths about these popular idols.

The author is not against specialization as such. Specialization is here to stay for the simple reason that no one can be an expert on everything in this day and age of information explosion. Increasing specialization means greater need for an integration of fields. We need models, concepts, metaphors and approaches which are not only interdisciplinary, but also are capable of raising issues about our implies metaphysics. Man by nature is a meaning-seeking animal. Most of the problems of modern industrial civilizations are related to their inability to fulfill the deeper hunger of man for meaning. That is why humanistic understanding and approach are necessary if we are to solve our problems. The trouble with the modern experts is that they bring only their expertise in a field in solving our problems. Human problems are never technical problems; they are basically human in nature and it takes a human approach to solve them. Our experts have very little concern and respect for the people involved; that is why they are unable to solve many of our problems in spite of their sophisticated technology and know-how. Only a humanistic education can prepare us for human tasks.

#### SENSE OF IMAGINATION

Critical examination is irrelevant unless we can imagine new and improved ways of doing things. In fact education can not be true to its spirit without developing the human imagination. Experimentation in science is the expression of human imagination. One of the greatest qualities of human spirit is its ability to develop new and creative ideas and ideals. However, often in our schools the human spirit of imagination is stifled. The major role of art, poetry, literature, etc., is to help the students to develop their sense of imagination especially outside these fields. Once their sense of imagination is developed, they are likely to find a new sense of community with the poets, mystics, artists, etc. and even the ancient myths would become meaningful to them. If the mythical stories are taken literally, they would not make much sense to us who are born and brought up in a modern environment. However, we can feel a sense of unity in spirit with the ancient peoples through their myths because we too have our expressions of imaginations. University must emerge as the centres of creative imagination.

Before we can develop a deep sense of imagination, we need to recognize the nature of modern education which tend to stifle our sense of imagination.



In an environment which glorifies profit or power, for example, the people are not "free" to think about losing profit or power and gaining a greater meaning to life. In the universities, we should think the unthinkable. However, imagining new ways of living is not a simple matter of cerebral activity. We can not think of a world of justice, equality and love unless we do have genuine love and respect for all. When we are caught up in all sorts of political, racial, and ideological conflicts, we are not in a position to imagine a new world of justice, love and respect for all. Freedom to think is not a legal fact, but a condition of the spirit. Universities must be a place where the students can experience a liberation of their spirits and not just their intellect.

We have to develop our sense of creative imagination if we are to understand science itself. Our concepts and models are not imposed upon us by our empirical observations. The former are the products of our imagination; and as such, they must ever remain flexible. Even a highly verified theory is not a finished product; to treat it as a finished product is to treat it as a sacred cow (an ideology). In fact a human being or a culture is not a finished product. The dynamism of life requires that we be open to its creative thrust if we are to grow. University is a community of scholars; but it is more than that; it is a community of intellectual mavericks who dare to criticize the sacred cows of the society and to imagine the unimaginable. For example, is it not possible to think of something nobler (higher) than profit to motivate us in our economic activities?... something better than nuclear weapons to protect us? Imaginative language opens up new avenues for research, interpretations and solutions. Many people in modern, industrialized, urbanized civilizations lost a good deal of their ability to imagine as a result of their rationalistic attitude. As Max Weber noted we are living in an "iron cage" due to a high degree of rational bureaucratization. A similar point is made by Ellul (1978) and Brueggermann (p. 66).

Higher education must increase our consciousness about the world we live in, including the problems we face, but it should also increase our faith in and respect for people. This is particularly crucial at this time of nuclear confrontation. We should not only discover how we came to be where we are, but also how to diffuse the explosive situation and open new ways of looking at life; and our imaginative thinking must be tested in the universities to be of any use in real life.

#### RAISING MORAL ISSUES\*\*\*

The universities of the West for the most part accepted the ideology of value-free science. Universities accepted their role as the suppliers of specialists and skilled labor for the industrial systems and the modern govern-

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\*\*\* So far I have only touched on the moral issues; in this section, I intend to deal with them explicitly.

ments. With the help of a value-free ideology, the students of natural science were able to build weapon systems of mass destruction for the highest bidder without raising the moral implications of such work; the students of economics could talk about profit even when the system employed thousands at the level of slave wages; the students of psychology and sociology could come up with ways of manipulating the people.

The value-free approach in science went hand in hand with the increasing demand and interest in specialization. Moral issues are general issues and they can not be raised as long as various fields are separated from each other. Most people could go through the modern university education without raising moral questions about their life. Who am I? What am I supposed to do with my education?... to make weapons of mass destruction?... to improve my own status and power? What is my responsibility to the less fortunate ones in my society and in others? These are some of the moral questions university education must help the students to answer. However, we can not help the students to raise the above-noted questions as long as the universities are deeply involved in the power politics of the society. How can a university which is economically benefitting from the South African apartheid be a moral force for racial equality?... a university getting most of its research money from the military be a moral force for peace? How can a scholar who is a consultant to a tobacco firm be a creative influence to human health? The universities are treated by the people involved as the avenue to increase their own power, prestige and income; thus the content of the education remains unchanged (Schumacher, p. 174).

The recognition that human beings are moral beings capable of living up to high ideals must be the central premise of our education. The nature of a human self is such that unless one is dedicated to high moral ideals, transcending the ego, chances are that he/she will be twisted by the littleness of the self. Moreover, as one gains more status, power, knowledge, and money, his/her moral responsibility towards others too must increase. As moral beings our sense of worth (self-respect) depends upon our moral life. We can have great accomplishments in many areas and still have very, very low self-respect. It is our sense of worth which infuses life with meaning. The real problem with modern life, particularly with university life, is that it does not lead to a greater sense of worth for the people involved. Universities have become the place where the mind is sharpened, but the soul is lost. Often the general competitive and acquisitive mentality prevalent in the culture is perfected in the universities.

Raising moral issues is not just a cerebral matter. The students must come in touch with their own moral sentiments before they can raise moral issues. Their need to discover their nationalistic or racist arrogance or their indifference to the suffering of others, for example, before they can be enlightened by moral ideals. They must also discover their own hurts, wounds, fears, jealousy, etc. Moreover, they should feel the hurts, wounds,

fears, hopes, etc. of others. Self-discovery and the discovery of others must go hand in hand in education. It is not enough for the students to discuss defense mechanisms; they must learn about their own (personal and cultural) defense mechanisms as they function in real life. It is not enough for the students to learn about logic in the abstract. Their understanding of logic must reveal the contradictions in their lives (personal and cultural).

The question is how to transform our hopes, fears, anxieties, etc., into creative energies for life. It is the moral ideals, the highest we can imagine, which enlighten and energize our life. It is the moral ideals, not facts and theories, which give us a sense of worth as people; and ideology is no substitute for moral principles. Moral principles are not just ideas. They are truths about life which can capture our devotion and infuse life with meaning and hope; and we can not violate them without paying a very high price for doing so. Only when we are committed to high ideals of justice, for example, are we able to feel the pain of injustice in the world; only then are we motivated to do something about injustice. The modern universities do have the resources to transform the world by making education a transforming experience in the lives of those involved. The question remains whether or not the universities will accept their call to transform the world. A humanistic examination of education is only a small beginning towards the goal of creative transformation of a world which desperately needs such a transformation.

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