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The University and Social Change

By Rudolf J. Siebert

1. Challenge and response

Social change manifests itself as the formation of, and the destruction of interhuman arrangements. It occurs in all human action systems—in culture, in social organization, in personality and behavioral organism. And its scientific exploration has always been difficult. From Confucius to Mao Tse-Tung and from Heraclitus, Thucydides and Sallust to T. Parsons, K. Merton, H. Marcuse and C. W. Mills, social change was one of the darkest areas that either the Eastern, or the Western mind had to consider. Today, at the end of the modern age and at the beginning of a new post-modern epoch, social change remains a most dramatic and most difficult challenge—a challenge which has to be faced. The business community must face it. The military and political communities must face it. And, the academic community must face it, not only theoretically and practically inside of the university as an institution, but in its social and cultural environments as well. The difficulties of our facing it are aggravated by the fact that the problem of social change is currently more than ever before confused by innumerable ideologies and counter-ideologies, which try to justify the promotion of, or the resistance to, social change by hopelessly distorting the social reality of which the university is a part. The end of such ideologies is certainly not yet in sight. To believe so is simply to indulge in wishful thinking, that is, to cultivate illusions. The modern mythmaker still does his best to becloud what little clarity we may have achieved by scientific observation and analysis concerning the problem of social change.

Our situation is obviously too urgent for us to busy ourselves merely historically with the problem of social change. The historian searches for a reality which was the “truth” for others, namely earlier
generations, but which is no longer the "truth" for us. We must, instead, learn to respond to the challenge which rapid, continually accelerating social change poses to our university here and now as part of our specific social organization and culture. Our time may run out. We may be forced to let social change drift in undesirable directions on Wednesday, when and if we have failed to analyze, predict, plan and direct it toward desirable goals on Monday.

But we will, nevertheless, not be able to respond adequately to the challenge of social change, either inside or outside the university, without taking into consideration not only the present situation but also the past and the future. The wider one's historical horizon stretches beyond the present into the past and into the future, the less one will panic and the less one will overreact in the face of serious and intense social change today. In our case, therefore, the best method seems to be to see the present situation of the university in the light of the past and the possible future stages in the evolution of the university in the West.

So far the university has gone through two stages: a theological stage and a philosophical stage. We are at present in the third, the positive stage. These stages of the evolution of the university constitute different forms of response to the challenges of different epochs in the development of western civilization. The theological university responded to the western feudal societis. The philosophical university responded to the middle-class nation state. The positive university is responding to a transition or incubation period leading to a postmodern epoch of western and world civilization. If we have courage and imagination enough, and if we hope against all hope, we could look forward to the development of a new humanistic university.

I am deeply convinced that we can fulfill our missions and mandates as teachers well only when we stop sometimes to reflect upon the moment or "kairos" in which we do our work and to see it in relation to what has happened before our time and to what may happen next.

Almost daily we are told—and not only by alarmists—that our society is involved in a variety of revolutionary changes: the black man's revolution, the third industrial revolution, the sexual or erotic revolution, the educational revolution, the revolution in our communication system. Perhaps I may shock my readers, particularly the liberal and radical readers, by the very simple revolutionary statement that there is not one real revolution going on in our society! According to the classical definition, revolution means the overturning of an object, the object in question being, of course, the extant power structure, the establishment, of a specific society. We in America, after all, are still living in our first republic, a republic created in the 18th century by an anti-colonialist revolution. And living in
our first republic is a privilege we share with few people in the community of western civilization; it is difficult for modern Frenchmen just to count the republics through which they have gone since the 18th century; the May Revolution of 1968 was abortive and therefore no revolution at all; the Germans have a hard time remembering the numerous constitutions under which they have lived in the 20th century alone. Unbelievable as it may sound, we live—in comparison to other nations in the East and the West—in a relatively stable society. We resist change, for ourselves and for others. We are involved in a war of social resistance against an undesirable form of social change in Indochina. We have behind us a series of interventions in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and now in Indonesia, for the particular purpose of preventing undesirable forms of social change. Our drive has been toward restabilizing those societies on a more traditionalistic basis. We have witnessed a series of political assassinations directed against great, world renowned Americans whose only mistake was that they had a dream of a new America which they wanted to create through orderly processes of social change—and even within the framework of the free enterprise system. The general mood in our society is at this moment—and has been for some time—highly conservative. There is no reason for us to get nervous about revolutionary changes which do not happen. In our society we should worry much more about social resistance than about revolutionary change.

This social resistance is what drives many of our students into desperation. Their fathers—in younger days—joined liberal and revolutionary groups because they hoped that social change was possible. The sons now join expressive movements of the most peculiar types and run away into nature, flower power, or to Canada, to Cuba, to Sweden, or to Switzerland, or take an LSD trip—not because there is revolutionary change going on at home, but because social resistance seems so triumphant that they have lost all hope that there is any evolutionary potential left in our society. We know they are wrong. But when we love our students and seek a key to their behavior, we must start our search from their desperation concerning the problem of social resistance; the problem of catalytic gaps in our society, which cannot be closed because of a fatal social catalepsy, which often blocks effective social change. Our students are not afraid of a catastrophe which may bring out a deep catharsis. They are deeply disturbed and confused and frightened because of the continual, and always victorious, social resistance in our country during the last five years. We heard the “Sieg Heil” shouted by the students at the riots in Chicago during the Democratic Convention of 1968. We know what that means. They wanted to remind the Chicago police—and the country—of the successful reactionary revolution in Nazi Germany. We know that
such exclamations express the students' feelings more than they express a clear analysis of that which really happens in our society. These students were more emotional than rational. But their fears are our challenge, when we meet them tomorrow, next week, and throughout the academic year.

In this country the academic community is not immediately challenged by revolutionary changes. A second American revolution would mean a circulation of the elite. Our society would cease to be dominated by management and would be controlled in the post-modern period, for instance, by intellectuals, that is, scientists and technocrats—or by labor. But there is not the slightest indication that social change in this country will take one of those two directions in the immediate future. We are not even in a pre-revolutionary period like Brazil is, for instance. Management is in control, not in absolute, but firm control, of the political directorate, of the military establishment, and of other institutions in our society. Should it gain absolute control and, thus, should the 127 most powerful corporations become something like a fourth branch of the government we would have a fascist totalitarianism. But the chances for even such a reactionary revolution are slight at this moment—or within the near future. Were it to possibly happen, as a reaction to further pressures from the left all around the globe, such a development could have the most serious consequences for the positive university. It would probably cease to be a university at all. That possibility, however, falls outside of our present consideration. It is most likely that we will muddle through for the near future, management playing its dominant role, but not unchallenged from other forces in society. A certain amount of pluralism will be preserved, while at the same time sufficient stability will be guaranteed by management's powerful position. Nevertheless, we should not build a smoke screen between us and social reality by labeling as "revolution" that which is not revolution, nor by not labeling a process of social change as "revolution" when it is one. Indochina, for instance, is in a real revolution—in the classical sense of the word.

To say that there is no revolution going on in our society does not mean that we are not undergoing deep social change. There is an intense polarization developing in our society both to the ideological Right and to the ideological Left. If this polarization cannot be arrested it will lead to more and faster partial social changes. The accumulation of such changes in family, economy, polity and church can some day in the future lead to social conditions under which a social revolution one way or the other, reactionary or progressive, becomes unavoidable and a historical necessity. We need look to our national conventions in order to notice an intense polarization to the Right and Left. We will, if we are sensitive enough, experience
this polarization as soon as we enter our classrooms. On the left we will find the long-haired and the bearded ones and on the right there will be the crewcuts! In the center there will sit the huge crowd of the well-balanced and well-synchronized hamburger eaters and future lawncutters and mortgage payers. Those in the center are the normal people. They take life as it comes and enjoy it. But it cannot be denied that the center has, in the last 5 years, decreased and the wings have increased. The difference between the Right and the Left in our classes, as well as in society, consists, of course, in their different attitudes toward social change. The Right has its ideal reference—society in the past, before 1933, when management was less challenged than it is today. The new Left, directly or indirectly stimulated by the writings of Michail Bakunin, has its ideal reference, too—society in the future; those on the Left have a dream of an American society as a free association of men and women on the basis of the principle of social justice, subsidiarity and love and without formal authority. Such an America has never existed before. They see no reason why this American dream should not come true since it looks to them so right and so beneficial. The further we move to the Right, the greater becomes the resistance against any form of social change which may transcend the status quo or the forms of domination of the past. The further we move to the Left, the greater becomes the attraction of the New. On the Left are the people who want the New to happen here and now and not somewhere else and later. The deficiency of the Right consists in the fact that it sacrifices the present and the future to the past. It is the mistake of the Left that it wants to sacrifice the past and the present for the future. Observe that neither of the two sides of the ideological spectrum has a present. Since the past is not any longer and is “gone with the wind”—and the future is not yet and nobody knows if it will ever come, each ideological group has really nothing yet or any longer. Society is, therefore, pulled apart between two extremes, each of which is as unlivable as the other. In the meantime, society may neglect to decide to do—and then to do—what must be done here and now, the present being the only real reality which is immediately at hand, and neither the Right nor the Left being able to bring about the necessary synthesis between social and cultural continuity and discontinuity. Recognizing that the idealistic university made that synthesis only on a very abstract level, it may be the task of the positive university to bring the idealistic synthesis between continuity and discontinuity down to earth.

It would be an idealistic illusion to believe that it was possible to keep the university entirely out of this process of polarization which is going on in our society, or that it was possible to maneuver the university into the eye of the storm of social change. The positive
university of today is challenged by the processes of social change, just as the theological and then the philosophical universities were before our time. They did not survive because their responses became inadequate to the challenges and pressures of social and historical change. It is our task to see to it that the responses of the positive university will be effective and that it does not become an anachronistic petrifact, but a factor of social evolution at the very front of social change, between rationality and absurdity. The New Left, from an organizational point of view, is still weak, ideologically confused and sociologically heterogeneous. But in the coming years, the New Left will be better organized and more active on our campuses than it ever was before. And that will lead to a further hardening of the Right. This is our challenge and we must respond. Our response in all academic departments and particularly in the general education programs must be an imaginative and creative synthesis of continuity and discontinuity in our specific areas of exploration, so that neither past, present, nor future is repressed. The past epoch of Western civilization must be superseded, that is, negated but at the same time preserved and elevated also.

2. The theological university

The evolution of the university started with a theological stage. The theological university of the middle-ages was as much concerned with the problem of social change as we are today. The professors of the theological university knew in principle the same structural factors and the same causal factors of social change with which we are familiar: the geographical, biological, demographical, psychological, social and cultural factors. But the theological university was more concerned with the divine ground and aim, the ethical law and the meaning, of social and historical change, concerns which today's value-free positive university does not have. On the other hand, the theological university knew little about the social units, the mechanisms and the profile of social change, areas in which the positive university has made some progress.

Facing the problem of social change, the positive university experiences some difficulties today in combining the academic mandate and the social mandate of the university. The theological university was neither a platonic academy nor a secluded pedagogical province. It was no monastery, no republic of scholars and no ivory tower. The western university in its first stage of evolution took its academic function, research and teaching seriously, but it responded actively at the same time to the functional requirements of the feudal organization of which it was a part. The theological university was a very practical institution with purposes useful for the society of
its day. University in the beginning did not mean "universitas literarum." The theological university seldom had all the classical faculties. University meant simply the community of professors and students who had organized themselves to pursue their common interests in certain fields of studies. Those studies had to a large extent the purpose of preparing the students for their different roles in the social organization. There was room for "paper technology" in the theological university despite the fact that it was direct opposite to a mere aggregate of technical schools or a technical school like the Soviet University for "fish utilization."

In the theological university the different sciences and faculties, teachers and students, research and teaching, academic and social mandate, reason and freedom, were integrated by a religious faith. The professor of the theological university was the carrier of an almost unchallenged, priestly—not prophetic—wisdom. He was the personification of a total style of life. He was the master. The student was simply an object of his teaching process. Some aspects of these types were preserved as the theological university evolved into the philosophical university; the professor still taught in cap and gown, from a high professorial podium, between two burning candles and in the midst of neoclassical architecture, sculptures and pictures. That was only a hundred years ago. The positive university of today has preserved only the cap and gown. Everything else flew away in the storm of social change—and we do not even regret it.

When the feudal system and the Christian Church disintegrated, the theological university lost its social basis and its principle of integration. It could no longer respond adequately to the processes of social change—to the destruction of feudalism and to the formation of the middle class societies of modern time.

The theological university reached its peak when the medieval society had already begun to disintegrate. Often the owls of Minerva start to fly when the dusk of the evening sets in. The contradictions of the declining feudal society became visible in the assertion of freedom for research, by the "artes liberales" against the theologians. Th Liberal Arts faculty was the seed of a new philosophical stage in the evolution of the university. As soon as the principle of the "double truth" had been announced in the framework of the theological university, the theological stage of the university had in principle come to an end, and the new philosophical university was conceived in the womb of the theological university. But it took about 200 years, from 1600 to 1800, until the last remains of the theological university were destroyed. The Worldview based on the Bible was eliminated from the university only by Kant's decision concerning the "conflict of the faculties" in 1800. Every later attempt to re-establish the theological university, for instance in Fascist Spain, failed. Spain tried to restore
the theological university after the civil war. This restoration was part of an attempt to re-stabilize the Spanish society on a traditionalistic basis. But the renovated theological university could not re-christianize Spain from on high, as had been expected. The only thing the Spanish youth learned in the restored theological university was that it could not adequately respond to the social changes of the 20th century. So the Spanish academic youth became atheistic. Then the "opus dei movement," which had begun to revitalize the theological university, tried—since it could not save the Spanish youth—to save at least itself and retired into the medieval "Estudio General de Navarra." Social and historical change does not move in cycles, but in a linear fashion. No return is possible in the 20th century either to a theological or a philosophical university. Those stages have been closed forever. The way can only lead ahead.

3. The philosophical university

Just as the theological university had been a response to the feudal society, the philosophical university evolved as a response to the challenges of the middle class society, particularly after the French revolution. The specific characteristic of the philosophical university was its autonomy, both external and internal. The external autonomy, the freedom in form and structure of the university, was neither a gift from the church nor from the state. The external autonomy of the philosophical, or idealistic university was the result of the struggle of professors and students. The rectors had juridical power over professors and students independent from the state. The rectors, Deans, and Professors together regulated all details concerning the students' immatriculation and exmatriculation, their caps, gowns, titles, examinations, the buildings, the behavior of caretakers and secretaries. Professors and students also had to fight for the inner autonomy of the university, what today we call "academic freedom." In the philosophical university, this freedom meant the intellectual independence of professors and students. This intellectual independence was based on the unity of reason and freedom, of research and teaching, of the academic and social mandate of the university. This unity was no longer based on a religious faith, but on the power of creative, imaginative reason. It is also obvious that the way today's positive university responds to the processes of social change will depend on its ability to integrate a new reason and freedom, the different departments, the professors, the students and the administration, the functions of research and teaching, the academic and the social mandates of the university. Our weakness consists in the fact that we have not yet found an adequate principle to replace the
philosophical faith in reason, which was characteristic of the idealistic university up to the first decades of this century. It is certainly not absurd to try to learn from the philosophical university concerning this point, at least until we are able to produce out of the positive university a new integrative principle. Sometimes it is prudent to take one step backwards in order to be able to go two steps ahead. That is part of the synthesis of historical continuity and discontinuity. Absolute cultural discontinuity from the idealistic university is for the positive university as impossible as absolute continuity with it.

The idealistic university defined its academic mandate as an attempt to search for truth in the community of researchers and students, without interference from church or state. The idealistic university demanded and got from state and society the freedom to teach the truth independent of the wishes and pressures of any interest or power groups in society. The philosophical university believed itself to be the historical realization of an eternal idea which was international, even worldwide, and opposed to any kind of intellectual provincialism. The idealistic university saw itself as a school unique in character. It was no longer a school in which students should be instructed as mere objects of education, as in the theological university. Now the student was supposed to participate actively in his professor's research and thereby acquire a scientific education and culture which would shape and determine the rest of his life. The freedom to learn corresponded to the freedom to teach. The students were considered to be independent, responsible thinkers who could follow critically the research and the teachings of the professors. The idealistic university saw itself as the place where state and society allowed the spirit of the time, the world- and self-consciousness of the nation, to unfold itself fully. Here professors and students came together as people with only one vocation—to search for and to grasp the truth. The emphasis of the educational process shifted from the teacher only, to his relationship with the student. In today's positive university, the emphasis would move further, to the person of the student. The concept of the unity of research and teaching was a unique achievement of the idealistic university. The principle of "publish or perish" is a caricature of this unity. This unity of research and teaching was a general European accomplishment. But it found its clearest expression in the Humboldtreform which was prepared in Göttingen and then institutionalized in Berlin. The 1810 Berlin model of the philosophical, idealistic, humanistic university was diffused to England by Cardinal Newman, to Russia by N. I. Pirogow, and to the United States by Abraham Flexner. Edward Everett, later president of Harvard, was the first American to receive his doctorate from the University of Göttingen, although Bancroft, Tickner, Cogwell, Longfellow, and Moteley—a co-student of Bismarck—had studied
in Göttingen. Together with these men Everett introduced the elements of the idealistic university into Harvard (1846-1849): academic freedom, the seminar, the doctorate, the differentiation of faculties. Charles William Eliot (1869-1909) brought another element of the humanistic university to Harvard: the student’s freedom to choose the subject matter he wanted to study. From Harvard the idea of the philosophical university spread to Johns Hopkins in Baltimore (1889) and to Chicago University (1891).

We must, of course, not romanticize this stage in the evolution of the university. It is true that its highest value was freedom; not only economic freedom as our business community understands it—but freedom as to unity with oneself in the other, and freedom as absence of social estrangement. But it is obvious that the idealistic university was only too often abused by the conservative, and by even the reactionary, forces of the Prussian as well as other states. The later materialistic revolt against the idealistic university and against idealism in general was a consequence of the conservative role which the idealistic university played only too often in the middle class society.

The main criticism against the idealistic university today is directed against its social isolation. The idealistic university over-emphasized the academic function and did not pay sufficient attention to the university’s social mandate. It was too far removed from the processes of empirical social change. It is said today that the idealistic university developed the physical, intellectual, and moral freedom of a specific type of historical man only, the man of the middle classes. It is exactly because of this onesidedness that the idealistic university is said to be unable now, during the decline of the middle class, to produce a new man, a man able to withstand the pressure of social change in a transition period and give direction to social change in a responsible way. The idealistic university is criticized because it seemed to be unable to respond adequately to a post-middle class age. This criticism is a death sentence to the middle class as well as to its university. The students of the New Left at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Chicago and elsewhere, propagating Bakunin’s anti-authoritarian socialism, seem to have the ambition to execute this sentence.

Like the theological university, the philosophical university dis-integrated only slowly. Today it is hard even to imagine how students felt who listened to a Schelling and a Hegel. But we know that the atmosphere of the philosophical university was already very different when Liebig and Helmholtz taught. Their students were still industrious scholars. But there was already a world of difference between them and the students of the great idealists from Kant to Hegel. Around 1900, the voices announcing the decay of the philosophical university became louder. But there were still Mommsen and Dilthey. From a
later perspective, the 90’s of the last century even appeared as the “golden age” of the philosophical university. And as late as the 20’s of this century we still had such a great professor, researcher and teacher as Max Weber, one of the fathers of our sociological functionalism and its theory of social change. But when Weber traveled through Chicago on his way to St. Louis in 1900 and saw the huge industries and the tremendous waste of human lives in Chicago’s slums and the small houses of the professors, he knew that the humanistic age had passed away and with it the philosophical university. In 1906 he wrote—stimulated by the Russian revolution of that year—that world history was now moving from central Europe to the prairies of America and Russia, as a thousand years ago it had shifted from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. He thought that the monotony of those prairies were conducive to a social uniformity which was not very much in favor of the spirit of humanism and the philosophical university.

Until recently (1968) all the German student had to look up to in the traditional German university was Karl Jaspers. And Jaspers was humble enough to know that he could not stand up to his great predecessors in the philosophical university. The best of what Jaspers had to say had all been said when the philosophical university was at its peak—before 1831, the year Hegel died in Berlin of cholera. Our American students have Galbraith, at least, who combines a humanistic with a scientific perspective. The students of the New Left speak like H. Marcuse and act according to C. W. Mills, both of whom combined humanistic and scientific elements in their writings. But the voices of the last professors of the old humanistic university or maybe the first professors of the new humanistic university of the future have become or still are very weak. Jasper’s “world philosophy,” Whitehead’s “worldloyalty,” Spranger’s “worldconscience” have an awfully hard time making themselves heard and understood in contemporary society.

One cannot argue that the idealistic university was not concerned with the problems of social change. One might even say that the philosophical university worked harder on the problem of social change than the theological university ever did, and harder than the positive university has done so far. It could also be said that the idealistic university invented “history” and, therefore, social change also, which is nothing other than saying that history is a dynamic system of cultural, social, psychological, biological and geographical correlations. In his philosophy of history Hegel, following Herder, synthesized everything that had ever been said in east or west about the problem of social change. The philosophical university was not only just as concerned with the divine and human origin and goal of social and historical change as the theological university was, but it prepared us also for the positive university’s work in the area of
human action systems as the material of social change and of the
causal factors and the course-profile of social evolution as well. The
greater the decline of the philosophical university, the more its philos-
ophies of social and historical change were perverted into right and
left wing ideologies. Through the whole 19th century, professors of
small caliber, ex-professors and pseudo-professors sat particularly on
Hegel's posterior and shouted proudly to the world that they had
found a new "Weltanschauung"—either more to the Left or more
to the Right—and that the world had never looked so beautiful as
it did now from their new perspective. This ideological Mardi gras
went on until in this century the Hegelian right and the Hegelian
left met in bloody battle in Stalingrad, in Algeria, in Korea, in Indo-
china. The philosophical university cannot be held immediately
responsible for this development of progressive and regressive ideologies
and the consequent international conflicts. This unfortunate develop-
ment was rather the result of what today's functionalists would call
a latent disfunction of the philosophical university's activities. But
the battles of the 20th century have something to do with the
evolution of the philosophical university. They should remind us of
the tremendous responsibility we, as members of the positive university,
may have for the social changes of the future. It is, therefore, time
for the positive university to develop a methodology of historical
initiative, through the cooperation of all academic departments, so
that we may be in better control of the social consequences of our
work than the professors of the philosophical university were of theirs.
4. The positive university

We are now prepared to close the circle of our reflection on the
university's evolution and to return from the theological and philo-
osophical ages, to our epoch of positivity. We can now better determine
how the positive university will have to respond to social change
when it wants to weather the storm of the second half of this century.

The positive university will take the social mandate of the uni-
versity seriously. Professors and students alike will be politically
engaged; probably never before in American history did so many
professors run for low, high and even the highest political offices
as in the election year of 1968. The highly individualistic and intro-
verted professor of the philosophical university was inclined to leave
politics to inferior creatures. The professor and the student of the
positive university know that their university and their society will
not survive humanely if the positive university is not deeply concerned
with its social mandate.

The positive university cannot offer to its students or to society
a religious faith or a faith in the power of speculative reason as the
theological university and philosophical university did. Its only basis
of integration is scientific observation and understanding, technique
and method. It can do nothing other than to supply the proper conditions for a rational and critical search for knowledge in all academic departments. The intellectual virtues which the positive university can teach are critical rationality, intellectual honesty, consequent and methodical self-criticism, readiness for intellectual cooperation, creative imagination, critical distance from every type of subject matter, prejudices and postulates. It can lead the student to intellectual objectivity and impartiality. It can produce in him a critical consciousness. The positive university at its best will act as a critical institution.

The positive university will take the full responsibility for the social changes produced by its research and teaching. Insofar as the university does research, it has institutionalized social change within itself. Every teacher who instructs his students differently from the way his predecessor did, whether by form or content, has thereby effected social change within the university and beyond that in society. One need not go to Washington in order to make history.

The positive university at its best will hold on to the idea of autonomy which developed within the idealistic university. Autonomously it will set up its own academic projects, independent from interest groups in society. But it will do so with full responsibility to society as a whole. The positive university knows itself as a creation of society and therefore as the legitimate institution for the realization of science in society.

The positive university must defend its autonomy, if necessary, even against the state which finances it. Although it should take seriously the statement of the National Defense Act of 1958, which points out that it is the purpose of the university to serve the state and the nation and to teach and to be involved in research, the positive university must try to convince the state and the nation that it can serve both best when it can do its research and its teaching in fullest autonomy. The more autonomy it has, the more adequately will the university respond to the challenge of social change. There are certain things which the national guard and the police and the FBI cannot do but which the professor and student together can do for their state and their nation.

The philosophical university tried to produce the metaphysical man. The positive university will have to develop the “political man”—the word “political” to be understood in the broad sense in which it was used in all social philosophies between Plato and Hegel. The political man of the positive university will have to learn to live without illusions. Nothing is more difficult than that. Even those great men who fell by the assassins’ hands during these past few years had certain illusions concerning the social system in which they lived, the brutal law of social inertia, the fierceness of all resistance to
social change and the jungle and barbarism which come to the surface in transition periods such as ours. The positive university at its best will produce a man who has sufficient insight and independence of thought that he can warn his society of intoxicating ideologies and hypnotizing myths and be able to fortify it against political temptations coming from those ideologies and myths. During our transition period the student of the positive university will often be angry and in revolt. But the humanization process cannot progress without anger—anger directed against the barriers which try to stop or delay it. The positive university will have to transform the forces of revolt into energies of reason, a reason which does not bend to a sterile conformism or to abstract utopias. The positive university reflects none of the objective salvation history typical of the theological university, nor of the metaphysical models of social change typical of the philosophical university, nor of demonic powers of a necessary world historical dialectics. But at its best, it may know about the intellectual and moral power of the individual man as a real factor—the "subjective factor"—in social change striving toward the realization of a humane social existence.

The new political man will not stop to ask for the legitimization of all types of power. The positive university should produce a man who is able to practice power-critique. Without such power-critique man would have got stuck a long time ago in the morality of relative customs and the authority of tradition. In the epoch of the theological university power-critique was punished by death. It was considered to be a crime against what was eternally valid and, therefore, RIGHT, a priori. With the arrival of democracy, power-critique was institutionalized. It is the specific characteristic of a functioning democracy that it does not need illusion in order to be the ideal social order. It is a changeable order based on the "imperfect perfectibility" of man. A great society can certainly not be built on skepticism. But a society without an element of skeptical, and critical, consciousness would be like hell on earth. Too often pure idealism has served to justify the most horrible abuse of power.

The positive university will be a democratic institution which corresponds to the age of democracy. The positive university will know that man can only be in possession of himself—one with himself in the others and thereby at peace with himself and free—when he does not establish power taboos which separate him from himself and keep him in estrangement. The new man of the positive university will know his own historical situation to be the result of the work of all generations of mankind. He will therefore let man's work be man's work and let myth be myth. He will not capitulate or collapse, either intellectually or morally, before the deification of social and historical change itself or before the charisma of the great leader or the strong man, whom democracies usually call in when social change
becomes too fast, too chaotic, and too confusing. He will not indulge in masochistic submission under party power. He will know that all world history is only human—and all too human. The student of the positive university will learn that whoever attacked the relative morality of the past was always first seen as a bad man; and then, if in the next epoch people were not able to restore the old morality, they simply made the bad man into a good man. The non-conformist of today is the conformist of tomorrow. The story of social change is almost exclusively a report about yesterday's bad agent of social change who has become the good man today. Social security, medicare, birth control were "un-American" yesterday, but are "American" today. The guaranteed annual income for the worker (why not for the student?) is still un-American today, but will be American tomorrow. Those who weep today will laugh tomorrow. The Sermon on the Mount is still a much better and more revolutionary theory of social change than the communist manifesto and deserves, therefore, more than the manifesto does, to be incorporated into the new humanism of the positive university, should it ever become a reality. The student will learn in the positive university that not only power, but also power-critique—as well as the absence of such critique—produces social and historical change. To know that seems to be more important than the knowledge of all the tricks of social engineering.

As the theological and the philosophical universities did, so will the positive university have to produce an integrated model of social change that can serve modern man as a compass for finding his way in time, as Augustine's model of social change, for instance, showed medieval man his way in history. The positive university must become much more "positive" before we can think of a new integration of the positive sciences, a new humanism, or a new ontology. And if such a humanism or ontology or integration should ever come about, it will remain in closest contact with the positive sciences out of which it will have developed. It will not constitute a metaphysical dome high above the individual sciences and out of contact with them, as often was the case in the philosophical university. Cross-disciplinary general education programs may help to bring about such a synthesis of the sciences in a new humanism. But for now we can only hope that each science or each department of the positive university will learn all there is to learn about the individual factors of social change; geography about the geographical factor, biology about the biological factor, psychology about the psychological factor, sociology about the social factor, and anthropology about the cultural factor; and that the student, in turn, will learn about the inner potential of all those factors. He will learn to think scientifically, that is, rationally, about such variables of social change. He will find a hierarchical order in those factors which must be theoretically and practically
observed in order that social change does not lead into individual and collective catastrophies. If the student puts the lower factors—for instance, the geographical and biological factors—above the social and cultural factors and produces a “blood and soil theory” of social and historical change, then he has already taken the first step toward his personal ruin and the disaster of the nation to which he belongs. To be sure, the purpose of the university is intellectual rather than moral. But intellectual achievements have moral presuppositions as well as moral consequences.

Nothing will bring the different departments of the positive university to a better and faster insight into their own limitations than a confrontation with the problem of social change and with attempts to assault the all-but-impregnable *arcanum* that contains the secret of history. But to have noticed the limit means that the limit has been overstepped already. The limit has been transcended as soon as the positive sciences see their deficiencies and close themselves together in order to produce an integrated model of social change. As soon as that happens the door will be open to the new humanism of the future.

The positive university, at least up till then, will have been a hard school, because the coming generation always wants to find the one master-key which opens at once all the doors to the processes of social and historical change, while the positive university will offer only many little keys which can open many little doors to various aspects of social change but not the door to the *arcanum* of social evolution. Nevertheless some day in the future the positive university may be able to bind all the little keys together and thus be able to open bigger doors to the inner logic of social and historical change. I hope we will like what we see then. Until then, the positive university will teach hard and disciplined work, patience, and a hope which is not merely a sentiment or an affectation but an intellectual quality which can be taught and must be learned in a transition period, or incubation period. The positive university will be a hard school because by its analytical method it necessarily destroys the students’ illusion that a social order without contradictions or estrangements can be planned—or perhaps even realized—in the immediate future.

The various academic departments can teach about social change without adding elements to their methodology or to their subject matter which are foreign to them. They need only teach their subject matter well, and they teach well about social change. And as they do, they create implicitly, or even explicitly, an integrated model of social change and a new humanism.

In this context the cross-disciplinary programs have a great task to fulfill. Since each department is bound to its own class of factors of social change, the cross-disciplinary programs can explore the
interdependence of the different factors of social change which are studied separately by the positive sciences in the various departments. We have already substituted departmental structure for the former division of the faculty in the idealistic university because it became too rigid and handicapped the further evolution of the positive university. The general education programs can go a step further. They can build bridges between the old humanism of the philosophical university and the new humanism of the future positive university. They can show how the different factors of social change, discovered by the positive sciences, can be responsibly combined and re-combined in the future so that a free human existence may become possible in the post-modern era, whether it be dominated by management, by labor, or by the technocrats—or by all three of them. None of the classes of variables of social change studied by the positive sciences will automatically lead to a free society. They are all ambivalent in relation to this goal. The businessman combines the different factors of production—land, capital, labor, and managerial abilities—in order to produce a commodity. Each man’s existence is the result of his own work. Each man and each nation combine and re-combine all classes of variables of social change in order to compose an always new totality of individual or collective existence. The biography of the individual and the history of a nation are the results of such combinations. Insofar as the general education programs are still rooted in the old humanistic university, they will appear to lag somewhat behind the positive sciences. Insofar as they prepare the new humanism, they will be the most progressive programs and they will be a symbol of hope for students, professors, and society. The professor in a general education program needs courage to leave gaps in his teaching and, if necessary, to endure his own dilettantism concerning this or that factor of social change. But nobody in the positive university is in a better situation to respond to the greatest of all challenges which social change poses to the positive university than the professor and the student in a program of cross-disciplinary general education, namely the challenge to unite cultural continuity and discontinuity—the past, the present, and the future—into a new intellectual synthesis and so to prepare the fourth stage in the evolution of the university: a positive university which is at the same time deeply humanistic and as such the adequate response to the post-modern epoch of world history.