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Interdisciplinary Perspectives earnestly solicits contributions dealing with the theory and practice of general and liberal studies. Articles should be limited to thirty double-spaced typed pages. Rebuttals and other comments on published articles should be limited to five double-spaced pages. Documentation should be included in the text. Send one copy held by paper clip, with a self-addressed stamped envelope, to the Editor, Perspectives, College of Basic Studies, Boston University 871 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215.
The Editor’s Page

Yes, the journal you hold is Perspectives, with a new cover design, a partially new name, a new editor, and a new layout. But Interdisciplinary Perspectives intends to serve those in general education as well as or better than they were ever served — for as long as possible.

But the readership of Interdisciplinary Perspectives must become engaged in the interchange between editor/author/reader, or this journal, like many others, will wither and die. Or, perhaps, it will simply die. The possibility of this being the last or penultimate issue is real. What should YOU do? Increase your level of activity in AGLS; insist that friends, enemies, colleagues, subordinates become members — readers — authors — convention participants.

The current issue reflects the range of interests of the readership of Interdisciplinary Perspectives, the flavor of the convention in October in Boston, and the judgments of a revitalized editorial board. (That last is not entirely fair, for I made the final selection, and did override the advice of the board in at least one instance, yet I wish to make clear that the editorial board has much influence with me: their judgments are severe, yet fair, and I hope to be able to depend on them for even more aid than they gave me in this issue.) Back to an earlier point — you will find within articles which range from record keeping to aesthetics testing, from a survey of past experience to a review of the 1976 conference, from a sharp attack on one kind of thinking to a speculative query as to where we should be going — a broad range — or a smorgasbord, depending on your view. But all offer something to respond or to react to — and if you do, perhaps you’ll send it in to see if the board (and I) respond to you.

Please indicate your opinion of the revised title and cover page. If you have other title ideas please send them along.

Final Note: I hope this journal lives, although editing it is not much fun. If it does not, those responsible will not be the editor, the editorial board, or the executive board of AGLS.

G. F. E.
The Fallacy of Elitism in General Education

Robert A. Dentler

An address prepared for the

Association of

General and Liberal Studies Conference, 1976

Much has been written by academic historians about anti-intellectualism in North America, but the same academic brotherhood has had little to say on the subject of academic elitism. This subject may be too close to home. Elitism has been rife among North American academics for 300 years.

The term elite springs from the French. It is related to the Latin for the elect. It refers to one who is chosen — to the flower, the cream, the aristocracy. Political scientists have extended the term to its natural base in power in relations. Most academics who hope to be numbered among the elite within the volatile stratification structure of North American society maintain an unconsciousness about their power surgencies. Or, at least they have the decency — for in the humanist tradition this is a virtue to be associated with the elitism implicit in the classic personal style of balance and cool civility — to mask their appetite for power with the humility of merit.

General education, ironically, did not evolve as an antidote to academic elitism. Rather it began as an attempt to restore and protect elitism from the ravages of professionalism and specialization. Although general education has come a long way since its early days, its agents have most often had to co-exist among those academics who continue to be the most virulent carriers of the elitist ideal. But more of this later.
First, what shall we say of academic elitism as a living, thriving concept in this, the last quarter of the twentieth century? What do we know about elitism that those who have gone before us did not know?

We now know a great deal about social structure. We can safely conclude that all human social systems are stratified; that subsystems within them are stratified in ways that correspond roughly to the overall system’s structure; and that power tends, over time, to concentrate in some but not all niches of a few of the top strata. We can resonate to older dreams of classless societies. We can learn from those dreams of possibilities for mitigating the effects of one or another cultural design for stratification. But we need not continue to dream of the possibility of enduring classlessness.

We also know that stratification structures change over time and that neither the structures nor the changes they undergo are the result of the workings of any kind of natural law. We can be certain, therefore, that Calvin was incorrect: No external signs of salvation have been established by God or nature. Rather, what is socially desirable is itself variable within as well as comparatively divergent across societies. And, within societies, most people will tend to equate what is desirable with what is manifested in the lives of those in the top stratum.

Conversely, those elite groups will believe this themselves, no matter how miserable the desirabilities lodged in custom and artifacts make them. They will not only work to insure that others go on believing this, but they will monopolize their hold on the desiderata.

Elitism, then, is flawed, not because people are unequal in abilities but because those abilities are too numerous, changeable, and immeasurable (prior to their manifestation across the life cycle) to provide the basis for group membership or status attribution. The latter forms through ascription, chance-filled circumstances, and achievements that are not a function of minor variations in mental abilities of the sort captured by paper and pencil tests or essay examinations. The cream of genius rises in ways no academic can control. Often in history, it has risen only when bottled outside the dairy of a college faculty.

Many of these propositions did not get explicated, let alone clarified and tested, until this century, although they are foreshadowed in some nineteenth century German and French social scientific thought.

Thomas Jefferson, for example, whose views about natural aristocracies are often cited by philosophers weak in historical scholarship and weaker still in sociological learning, knew little about these propositions. Eighteenth century rationalism gave him no frame of sociological reference. He was poorly trained to observe, let alone describe and generalize about, social relations. His writings about nature are precise and informative but his ideas about politics and social life, while vigorously and memorably stated, are imprecise and ignorant by contrast. One has only to recall his description of Negroes, or his advice to his most beloved daughter about cleanliness and obedience, or his reports on French court dress and manners, to get the point.

Jefferson was raised to be inspired by the European notion of aristocracy. What he did with this inspiration was link it with his reverence for nature and for the farmer’s determination to live with and master parts of nature. His vision of a natural aristocracy was impelled by his ascribed social status and his need to reconcile it with the theme of liberty so cherished among the circulating elites of his time. Moreover, that vision of aristocracy was fueled by a conventional, classical education, by a disposition toward the perform-
ing arts, and by his architectural and mechanical curiosities.

We know today that there is no such thing as a natural aristocracy. Life chances — for survival, knowledge, health, wealth, influence, and style alike — are demonstrably overdetermined by social structural events. It is long after this determination through events has taken shape that each person secures, fails to secure, and wins or loses membership in an elite group within a social stratum. It is long after, as well, that we rationalize this occurrence autobiographically.

We know today, too, that each person can affect some features of his life chances. The individual is an influential variable, one among dozens that are environmental and macro as well as micro-social, in placing himself within society. Jefferson could not have known this in the way we know it, but he did discern that revolution was a powerful instrument that could be wielded by individuals in order to alter radically the status structure in which they found themselves. Incidentally, the act of becoming a revolutionary vaulted Jefferson into the governorship, where his performance was so poor as to nearly cost him his future life chances. He nearly settled for being a rural recluse!

Membership in an elite group is thus something one obtains, through ascription at birth, or through the concatenations of social chances, with or without individual effort, or both. When one has obtained membership, moreover, he or she is expected to explain it on the basis of whatever desirable virtues or abilities are popularly associated with the group. Against criteria of performance, members of the group may be found to be incompetent, de-ranged, or merely randomly distributed, but the social fact of this condition will be explained away as a matter of peculiar exceptions. Any marginal observer can verify the fact that, within elites, both stupidity and wisdom are randomly distributed.

As Menges reported recently in a brilliant summary of sustained research on the measurement of qualifications for entry into many contemporary professions, including medicine, dentistry, law, and education, none has an even remotely valid measure or set of measures for gauging qualifications. For example, graduation from a law school predicts weakly to successful passage of a bar examination in the state where the law school is located, but neither law school grades nor bar exams nor both combined provide more than zero correlation with performance as a law clerk, let alone as a practicing attorney.

Intelligence tests have been subjected to a twenty-five year challenge so well documented that they will very likely fail to recover their place in the panoply of sifting measures, except as diagnostic aids in the evaluation of extreme exceptionality. The National Teachers Examinations — a vast battery of them, all prepared by the thousands of test makers at the Educational Testing Service, that bastion of natural aristocrats — have been found repeatedly to have zero and even minus correlations with teaching competencies in the field of practice. Menges concludes that the only measures found to have some value are those involving the evaluation of performance in real life situations.

In spite of this, the earnest carriers of the movement called general education have only begun, in the last two decades, to move out and beyond a sycophantic dependency upon the elitist apparitions of academics in the cognate disciplines and their colleagues in the oldest of the learned professional schools. History has worked against this liberation, for general education began as a quest for the restoration of the elitist preoccupation with production of proud possessors of the classic personal style. It worked to restore what was lost in the cafeteria of disparate and hyper-sequestered
academic concentrations that emerged as the American imitation of German scholarship and scientism. General education got its initial legitimacy from those members of the academic elite who yearned for the disappearing graciousness of clear thinking, civility, reason with a capital R, rhetoric and prosody, and balance in all things mental and emotional.

When teachers began to build a pedagogy and a content unique to general education, however, many of them were thrilled to discover that their work was *generalizable*. The new pedagogy and the correlatives stressing connections between diverse thoughtways turned out to have a magnetism, when well handled, that was more potent than had ever been imagined. This was a dangerous, prospectively revolutionary discovery: It implied that tedium, mental construction, even intellectual paralysis, attached to higher learning whenever it lacked the generalist properties, at least for many learners.

As this implication gathered force, general education enthusiasts began to make painful choices. They were not eager to have their elite group membership cards taken away. They developed a series of semblances, some witting and some others more like ego-serving defenses. They swore fidelity to elitist principles in student recruitment, admissions, retention, grading policies, and recommendations for further study or employment. They swore fidelity to the cognate disciplines from which they took their graduate degrees, even though they had learned much about the poor fit between each discipline and the ways in which most students learn to love learning. They justified their expenditures on the basis of the conventional successes of their graduates rather than on measures of continuing growth as a learner.

What is more, general education aped conventional higher education in its internal stratifications and separations. One cadre moved into the lower circle of high schools, isolated as the working class of the movement. Another moved into community colleges and junior colleges as the equivalent of the lower middle class, with few opportunities for transfer into the elite colleges and universities. Those who inhabited conventional liberal arts colleges snuggled down deep into the nests of regular departments, giving off periodic sparks of scholarly specialization. Those in colleges of basic studies or the like within universities consolidated their positions on the bottom of the local ladder of elites. They justified their existences as ancillary or second-chance agencies, rather than as extraordinary enterprises in their own right.

These various adaptations, like protective coloration, surprise no observer. Unlike the snow rabbit who senses he is white when he huddles into the frozen landscape, however, the general educator too often comes to believe in his coloration as if it were an intellectual virtue. Too often, he contributes to reinforcing the fallacy of elitism that corrodes the academic and thus the moral fabric of his institutional setting.

His experiments in curriculum, his findings from evaluation studies, his clinical experience in the classroom, and his subsequent encounters with former students all converge to indicate that he has developed something exciting, workable, and enduring. He has verged toward *inducing* students from extremely diverse backgrounds, with school records and test scores that range about the chart like wild buckshot, into a love of higher learning. He has found that this induction does not always work, to be sure, but when it does, it works along configurations of hidden capacities, delayed potentials for development, and undisclosed hungers for context, rapport, and challenge.

All of this is denied by a theory of elites. In general education, in other words, teaching has advanced beyond the notions of “700 SAT score in, 700
GRE score out,” and its scatalogical converse of “garbage in, garbage out.” Many general educators have found ways to intervene, which is the point of teaching after all.

Will this pioneer come at last to the barricade of academic revolution? Will she storm the gates of the dying citadel of conventional colleges of arts and sciences? Will she make real trouble for the keepers of the M.D’s, the J.D.’s, the D.D.S.’s, and the M.B.A.’s and Ph.D.’s, with respect to evidence about student admission, curriculum building, the collaborative design of instruction, and the assessment of qualifications for entry into professions? Will she make alliances across the divisions within her own movement? Will she ally herself with parallel movements in curriculum theory and development?

I hope so, truly. Thomas Jefferson, the revolutionary, knew that the time to strike for great changes in both law and culture was in the first blush of victory. Later, he believed, reaction and complacency would rush in to block all headway toward change. If he was correct, the revolution in general education may have come and gone, already. I do not know. Still, we may have created a new elite of alumni who will remember what has worth when their sons and daughters come of age during the next decade. The humanistic principle is that opportunities renew themselves forever.
Exclusion and Records: Another Threat to General Education

Raymond L. Chambers

Abstract: This paper is a brief examination of some of the arguments for and against two common practices in academia: excluding students who fail to maintain some minimum standard of progress and noting that failure on the student’s record. It is concluded that the arguments in favor of both procedures are inherently wrong-headed: dangerous to both education and the larger society. A response to the unenlightened general public and their legislators, exclusion and therefore its notation should be eliminated. Instead a more fluid, timeless process of education should be developed. Students should be expected to master material, but not on a time schedule.

Biases: The Nature and Purposes of General and Liberal Education

The assumption here is that general and liberal education is a desirable activity. General Education means that every person who wants to have a stab at education should be allowed to do so. Liberal in this context then refers to the notion that everyone should be exposed to a breadth of courses to assure some appreciation of humanness. This notion runs counter to the trend of the last 20 plus years that students should be specialized automatons. With modifications, general and liberal education parallels the English system, the products of which may discourse on Shakespeare and the meaning of life regardless of whether they head banks or build them.

The marriage of general and liberal with as large a segment of the population as possible is a desirable event. The failure to encourage the development of humans out of everyone produces a dangerous vicious cycle. A mindless, unthinking, emotional rabble so feared by the founding fathers, without the sensitivity to understand the complexities of life, could very
easily be captured by a demagogue. There are those, for example, who would point to the recent experience of Richard Nixon as an indication of what can happen if education of the public falls short. This rabble could then be enslaved in a miserable political and/or economic situation that may lead either to despair and dejection as in the Appalachians or to revolution, violence, crime as in the cities. We know, for example, that juvenile delinquents are characteristically fatalistic. They feel as if nothing they do can change their life . . . they are inherently bad people. Yet education can and does allow people to pull themselves out of their existences. That idea, after all, was the basis for public support of education and the strivings of the "baby boom" parents who wanted their kids to have "what I didn't." It is not surprising, then, that areas with the lowest levels of education also tend to have the highest crime rates — both officially reported and empirically observed. That is not to say, of course, that merely forcing people to stay in school will reduce crime. The rise in crime tended to parallel the increase in the number of high school graduates. Simultaneously, though, the number of those who (1) could read and write, (2) could think creatively, and (3) wanted to read, write and think creatively declined. The "express yourself" schools of the 1950's and 1960's failed in that students were not expected to learn a broad spectrum of ideas about the human condition of others as well as themselves. That is, they did not receive a liberal education — one that presupposes the need to be able to read and write.

Assuming that these observations are correct, more or less, and that the public schools will make little if any effort at changing themselves — the teachers, after all, were taught by the schools of the 1950's and 60's — then some organization must step in to correct, as much as possible, this situation. That organization at present is the college-university. If the objective of general and liberal education is to be met, then five conscious objectives must be adopted:

1. Colleges should admit any warm body that appears at their doors. This is especially true for universities if they are seriously interested in a universal education for their students and for the general public.

2. The appropriate people, faculties, special instructors or divisions, administrators must assume that most people are improvable if not perfectable. Of course present techniques, interdisciplinary approaches, knowledge, etc., may not be sufficient for the task. Therefore,

3. One must have faith in the potential of the human mind. This faith must be multifaceted. That is, one must believe that the student's mind has potential. But even in the face of obvious incapability, one must have faith also in the minds of the teachers and the researchers. For their work may rebound to help the incapable student. THUS,

4. Colleges and teachers must be willing to work with students as long as necessary or until the student gives up or until the student's or the state's money simply dries up. Do not let them get away! What if, two months after you give up on the student, a new technique is reported that might have helped that student survive, improve his life, improve society . . . Might, that is, if you still had him. And what is he doing now???

5. Even if persons simply cannot be improved for whatever reason, they are still valuable people to keep around.
a) Perhaps by keeping them, you make them "safe" — remove the possibility of them reverting to the street.
b) You also have ready-made subjects for study and experimentation with new techniques.
c) And you do save money since they are off the street.

The Threat to General and Liberal Education

These proposals are anathema to large segments of the general public, government, and even academia. There is an ever increasing desire for "exclusivity," "excellence," and the notion that "not everybody was meant for college."

There are a number of reasons why people want to make education less general and probably less liberal as well. For one thing, there is general disillusionment with the power of education. People expected to walk out of college with the certainty of a "better" job. Yet the job market, the increasing number of graduates, the increasing number who "squeeked through" probably because institutions had too few resources to identify those in need and help them, resulted in the absurd condition of being "over qualified" for the available jobs. That such a development should occur is the result also of an inadequate educational system. Clearly, businessmen with their own high levels of education failed to learn that having a good mind at the bottom can help just as much as having one at the top.

At the same time as the college experience seemed to be failing to do its job — provide better jobs — it also became increasingly expensive. Thus, it appeared to be costing more to do less.

Third, there has developed a cohort of academic "bums" who use taxpayers' money in the form of VA benefits, Basic Grants, National Defense Student Loans, and who do not attend class or who fail to repay the loans. Disgust with "bums," increasing cost, and rising unemployment would certainly seem to lead to taxpayer resistance to general education.

Finally, education itself is a source of this threat. Not only has it failed to teach the businessmen about the value of the human mind at all levels of the corporate structure, but it has failed to clearly establish its mission. Not surprisingly, then, even large numbers of faculty members join in criticizing open admissions and indefinite careers in college. Few consciously see their role as being any higher than vocational training (including of college teachers). What more need to realize is that colleges must strive to broaden the minds of as many people as possible. They must be taught to think creatively, to respond to new circumstances as they arise, to adapt. The jobs will follow.

One word of caution regarding this recommendation. To create, it is first necessary to have something with which to create. Thus, the effort should not be directed to the kinds of experimental instruction that characterized the public schools of the 1950's and 60's. Rather all levels of education should strive to transmit the basics not only of reading and writing but also of each individual discipline. Furthermore, understanding of each basic, how it fits with the others, why it is important, will help the student to develop the necessary creativity, adaptability.

Instead, however, the trend has been to strike back at what has been seen as abuses. Instead of opening doors wider, many schools have resorted to limited enrollments. State governments have reduced either the support or the increases in support to colleges forcing larger classes and cutbacks in faculty
and students. And a third weapon in this arsenal of attack on general and liberal education is the revived interest in exclusion-suspension-probation.

The Nature and Purpose of Exclusion

Exclusionary systems found in most colleges usually involve a system of warning a student that he or she is in academic difficulty and then booting him or her out if there is no demonstrable "satisfactory academic progress." Frequently, students may be readmitted after varying periods of time on the assumption that enforced penitence will suddenly produce either a genius or a more self-controlled individual less inclined to "goofing off." "Satisfactory academic progress" is usually determined by computing a grade point average on the basis of a number of credit hours attempted. The system may be more or less arbitrary. Some schools simply sever a student's academic neck automatically. Others offer systems of recommendations, counselings, appeals, etc. At least one even permits a committee of faculty members to overrule the system at least for a short period of time. Few, if any, exclusion systems take into account where the student started (an "F" student who suddenly starts making "D's" is still not making "satisfactory progress"), the variability of grading systems, and the relationship the student had to the teacher and the material.

There are a number of reasons for exclusionary systems. For one thing, schools can advertise their "standards." This quality permits them to (falsely) suggest by implication that they are good schools, the best students should go to them, and that they are virtually assured of a fantastic job upon graduation since they are so highly regarded — they have such high standards.

Second, exclusion is an automatic, painless way to remove the academic "bums." These are the people who are probably on some form of assistance and just simply do not show up to class. Chances are they either collect their checks and run or spend their time in the pool room or bleeding the suckers over poker. Since failure to show up and/or take tests means that they also fail, they are very quickly eliminated and sent back to the very places where they learned to rip off the system.

Third, "defective" students, those "who just don't have it," but who insist on coming to class and re-enrolling and who may or may not be on some form of assistance, are a real bother. First, they take up a faculty member's time which could be more profitably devoted to the brighter students. Together they may do some significant research. The bright student will get an even better education and go on to great heights him or herself. Furthermore, most faculty probably wouldn't know how to help a slower student and don't want to be bothered when there are so many other more interesting, challenging, rewarding, and less frustrating things to do. Clearly, "defective" students unfairly take away from the education of the brighter students.

But even further, they also take up space. And in specialized schools that refuse to increase their staffs and facilities in order to artificially increase the shortage of their graduates, the presence of "defective" students means that qualified students are turned away. This "problem" has occurred in recent years in response to efforts — generally poorly facilitated — to improve the lot of the poorly prepared minority students who want to be doctors, lawyers, etc. Of course, the solution is simple. Increase the number of seats available. Try telling that to the MD's and lawyers!

The Opposition to Exclusion

In spite of the "rationale" of exclusion, there are a number of objections to
the procedure. Broadly speaking, these counterarguments can be divided into two groups: those responding to the reasons for exclusion and those addressing larger issues concerning the effects of seeking “excellence” in college student bodies.

**The Irrationality of Exclusion**

The “rationale” utilized by supporters of exclusion actually appears to be quite irrational. For example, the argument regarding “standards” immediately confuses and elevates a very local phenomenon. On what basis is a determination of exclusion made? The answer is, of course, grades. And who determines the grades? Again the answer is obvious: teachers. Thus, the “standards” are established in the classroom. It is doubtful, now that college facilities are so readily available across the country, that employers consider the “reputation” of the entire school. What they look at is the student’s individual record. A student with consistently good grades is given a second look. A student with poor grades is encouraged (unless a minority) to go elsewhere. So why indulge in overkill? If a student finds reward in the college experience yet consistently flunks, then college is doing its job: an accurate (possibly) record of academic progress coupled with a humane concern with the benefit of all who are interested.

The other two arguments for exclusion reflect a clearly irrational gut reaction. The “bum,” for example, is the student who is so unimpressed with education — and perhaps his teachers in particular — that he uses his aid check to finance his extra-curricular activities while not attending or “learning.” How insulting! If someone doesn't appreciate what underpaid teachers are doing, he deserves to be cut away from the fold. Besides, these “bums” are just ripping off the taxpayer.

But as with most gut reactions, the effects of allowing the “bums” to remain are ignored. First, where else are these people likely to go? More than likely the only other place for them is the street. At least for the few hours they are in the student center-union they are separated from their old colleagues. Second, what else are these students to do once they are kicked out? If they are (by definition) on some form of aid, the odds are very high that they will revert to two twice-as-costly practices: welfare and crime. Not only do both cost money, but the latter actually endangers the life and happiness of all citizens including the teachers and administrators who excluded him/her.

More importantly, however, is the revolutionary idea that as long as the “bum” stays in the student center-union he/she will eventually become a “real” student. Political scientists are well aware of the inability of the classroom experience to affect norms, values, attitudes. Anytime a conscious, blatant or subtle attempt is made to influence students, post-test measurements fail to record any change. There are a number of reasons for this performance, of course, and few agree as to whether peer groups are more important than parents, than TV, etc. But many teachers are certain that a peer group is certainly more influential than they are. If so, a likely impact of allowing the “bums” to remain is to constantly expose them to peers who first may stimulate interest by discussion of what went on in class and then may shame the “bum” by finding him/her to be “out of it.” That is, the “bum” may find him/herself losing friends as they progress into new interests and he/she doesn’t. The long-range effect? Well, if we'd just give him/her a chance, possibly a new and real student.

Then, of course, there was the argument about the “defective” student taking up time and space that could be made available to those who could
make productive use of a college experience. The point is well taken. Yet there is a conflict between the needs of the “better” students and regular faculties and the needs of the country for an educated population and the American value of reward for hard work. Should colleges punish hard work by excluding those who may with time be salvageable? Should colleges send out people to enter the work and political world who are inadequately prepared to deal with these new pressures? Can there be any other option? The answer to at least the last question is yes. What is clearly needed is an expansion of educational facilities, staffs, opportunities. Special programs for those with some form of learning difficulty or inadequate preparation should be established. Some efforts in this direction have already been made. Boston University’s Basic Studies College represents a courageous leap. The University System of Georgia and some schools in Maine have “Special Studies” programs. Many programs, however, are instituted for the wrong reasons (integration) and with dysfunctional restrictions. Georgia, for example, limits the time a student may stay in Special Studies to one year. There is some confusion as to whether one year means 3 quarters or 12 months. Even so, since faculty members know that one year may not be sufficient to help some of these students, there is a tendency among some to evade the Regents’ limitation through a series of barely hidden tricks.

If special studies faculty are aware of the idiocy of arbitrary time limits since not all students learn at the same rate nor start at the same place, why are such limits established? Why is there no coherent effort made to expand education in the face of declining enrollments? Why, in fact, are cut backs planned and/or carried out? The answer is obvious. Few in the public understand that excellence means better education, not more restrictive admissions. Thus, if improvement is to be made, teachers and administrators must go into the communities regularly and forcefully to educate the public to the necessity of financing more programs of varying natures and enrollments.

The Broader Effects of Exclusion

There are other objections to exclusion. One, just noted, is that “normal academic progress” may not, in fact, be normal. No two students learn at the same rate or start from the same base point. Thus, exclusion is just simply illogical and unfair.

Second, exclusion is intellectually insulting. By excluding students, schools are saying, in effect, that they have no faith in their teachers’ capabilities, the students’ improvability, and the researchers’ ability to confront and solve problems. To say that we have reached the limits of the human mind is to deny the entire history of progress. Every day new developments in medicine are revealed offering hope to thousands, to cite just one example. But colleges are back in the 19th century when the popular conception was that everything had been invented already. Certainly this is a strange position for an institution whose job involves the study and improvement of the human mind.

Third, as has been repeatedly suggested, exclusion is simply socially dangerous. A fruitful avenue of research for criminologists may be the association of crime and exclusion. If a student is “smart” enough to graduate high school and get into college and learn the loopholes that permit him to become an academic bum, what kind of criminal is he likely to become if excluded?

Finally, exclusion of those who “just don’t have it” is extremely misleading. The criterion is, of course, grades. But there are a number of factors that
influence grading. The southern student may not understand the words of the northern teacher. Grades themselves are extremely imperfect measures of achievement and vary from teacher to teacher. Then, of course, there is the personality conflict that may develop. Furthermore, in an effort to both advance the chances of the "slower" student and avoid hurting the job chances of students, faculty have tended to give even higher grades to all students. Thus, employers cannot trust schools with exclusion systems since their graduates may, in fact, not be sufficiently well prepared. Those systems with programs designed positively rather than as punishment can now be trusted by employers. Exclusion, then, actually interferes with the integrity of the classroom and encourages the public attack that education has been receiving in recent years!

The Unholy Alliance: Exclusion and Records Offices

Given the evils of exclusion, it is astonishing not only that schools keep exclusionary systems, but that Records Offices are so eager to note on a student's record that he has been excluded. Not only is such a note educationally unwise, but it is also dangerous to the institution.

For example, suppose that a student "straightens out" and manages to graduate with a fairly respectable grade point average. To an employer or insurance agent, such extreme swings of behavior suggest a tendency toward instability. We know that instability has been a frequent cause of rejection for credit, jobs, insurance. If a student requests release of his record for job or credit purposes and is turned down because of his erratic record (which is frequently a reason why people do not enter graduate school), then the student will have cause for suing the school for violation of the Fair Credit Reporting Act. That is, the simple notation of exclusion without explanation and without a student's response directly violates the Act. Thus, to be truly accurate, a student's record should include not only grades and notes about exclusion, but also detailed statements from admission and exclusion committees, extended written statements from the student, and observations from outside sources concerning activities, etc. The cost and complexity of such a system is clearly prohibitive. It would be safer for the school then to simply drop the notation from the record.

That recommendation makes the skin of many registrars crawl. Their argument is that notations of exclusion tend to reflect accurately the student's career and thereby form an essential part of an historical record. The error here, of course, is that a notation is not a record. As noted above, a truly historical record would be unmanageable for most schools.

Furthermore, an exclusion notation is not an accurate reflection of a student's career. There are simply too many sources of error which are unaccounted for by a mere notation. Exclusion is based on grades and note has already been made on the unreliability of grades. It does not, additionally, take into account the nature of the school. Some students, upon transferring, discover they improve their performances. There is additionally the problem of being smarter than the teacher. The popular story has it that Einstein was "excluded," for example. How absurd! And what about home life situations, inadequate preparation, learning disabilities that are treatable, etc., etc. All of these are ignored by the notation EXCLUDED: (date).

Is a notation on a record really that important? Apparently so. A recent survey of 46 state coordinating bodies and 57 other individual schools, conducted by the author, revealed that only 20 schools (including one state
system) either purge their records or do not note exclusion at all. For most, not only are such notations important, but they will affect transferability as the response from Brigham Young University indicates:

You should be aware that it is our feeling that student records should reflect an objective, precise record of what the student has attempted, and should not be purged or changed in such a way that transfer institutions would be unable to make their own evaluation of the student's record or performance. Knowing that your college has this kind of system would jeopardize students' admission and scholarship opportunities if they transferred from Bainbridge to BYU.

At least one school, then, will use a socially undesirable, unreliable, erratic, unfair, misleading technique to unjustly penalize a possible transfer student. The collusion of records offices and exclusion, then, represents an insidious development that is inherently wrong and dangerous.

Conclusions

Extended beyond the limits of this discussion, the long range effects of exclusion, when combined with other factors, may produce the following:

1. The trend toward "standards," "excellence" will yield a greater drive for exclusion.

2. That in turn will logically lead to a push to eliminate "special" programs.

3. That will reduce the percentage of "educated" in the population and increase the percentage of those barely functional.

4. That will increase the drive for professionalism already manifested in the slightly reduced general education requirements reported in a recent CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

5. The end result will be a mass of poorly prepared and a minority of over-specialized privileged.

6. This situation could then result in demogogic leadership, an end to democracy, and a potential for violence and crime.

Admittedly, there is nothing inherent in exclusion and records that would produce such catastrophic developments. Exclusion, and its puppet, the records office, is merely a symptom of a larger unfortunate situation. If general and liberal education is to survive, all faculty and administrators must strive to re-educate the general American public to the real purpose of education and the need for that objective.
General Education: What Should Be Its Focus?

Paul F. Haas

It is apparently fashionable today to study and discuss the alternative methods used to teach the principles courses in the social sciences. Many of us have read about and have examined texts with greater lucidity and/or topical orientation. Many of us have also attempted to make our principles courses more relevant (assuming we can define relevant) by altering the course content or means of delivery. However, how many of us have actually attempted to define the purpose of our principles courses and have designed them specifically to pursue that purpose? Let us be even more challenging and inquire how many of us have asked where does our particular social science principles courses fit into the scheme of higher education, especially in the area relating to general education? The intent of this paper is to probe these questions and provide an alternative that will hopefully contribute a viable solution to the dilemma of teaching the social sciences and achieving the goals of a general education.

In virtually every college curriculum which professes to embrace the liberal education tradition we will find principles or introductory courses to all the disciplines. According to the promotional literature of these colleges, these courses are allegedly designed to broaden a student’s perspective of the world and to aid each student generate solutions which may be significantly influenced by study outside the specific discipline of the problem. For example, the study of our energy problem today must certainly include inputs from environmental, political, and economic sources as well as scientific areas in which the problem is centered. Yet, upon closer examination there are some substantial questions as to whether the principles courses actually serve this function or whether they serve primarily as feeders into the professional courses.

It is in reference to this concern that I wish to define the role of social science principles courses as the vehicle to provide not only mastery of some bodies of knowledge, but also coherence among those bodies to enhance personal development and to gain competence in shaping the physical and social world in which we live. [6, McCluskey and Worley, 1974]. In other words, I argue
that the primary purpose of the social science principles courses is to com-
mence the process of a liberal education. In many institutions the pursuit of
this liberal education is initiated in the general education courses, i.e., those
courses which attempt to establish some sort of unity in the educational
subject matter [1, Balkcum, 1974-1975] and mold a student into a responsible
human being and citizen [9, Report of the Commission on General Education,
1945]. Thus, it would seem that an instructor of a social science principles
course should attempt to develop his or her course to mesh the concepts of a
discipline with these goals of general education. In this manner the instructor
will be directing the course toward the whole student rather than at the more
narrow goal of developing a professional technician in a particular discipline.

Many educators have suggested that one way to achieve this broader goal is
to institute interdisciplinary study. However, if we wish to operationalize
interdisciplinary study, we need to develop a specific set of guidelines, which
would establish a common meaning to liberal education. We need to identify
the commonalities that link disciplines together. Without the acceptance of
such commonality, attempts to develop and teach a liberal education cur-
riculum will simply work at cross-purposes. For instance, in my own discip-
line of economics those few economists who do see liberal education as the
proper focus of the principles courses do not seem to have gained many
adherents because they lack a common definition of what liberal education
entails [5, Mann and Fusfeld, 1970; 8, Petr, 1971; and 10, Villard, 1969]. I
suspect that the same is true of the other social sciences.

If the objectives of liberal education are to be implemented, we need some
technique for determining success or failure. A first step to this end is to
define liberal education in terms of a set of competencies or skills which
contribute to all types of decision-making and learning. Thus, I argue that
education is liberal when it nurtures the following skills:

a. reading comprehension,

b. ability to identify assumptions,

c. ability to understand the patterns created by sets of assumptions, i.e.,
   paradigms,

d. identification of alternative inferences from a set of reasons or data,

e. evaluations of arguments, and

f. clarification of values.

Although it is frequently argued that these objectives of liberal education
are attained automatically whenever one studies the rudiments of a discip-
line, surely no one who understands marginalism would claim that this
procedure is optimal. A disciplinary-based curriculum is molded by
specialized paradigms which imposed particular agendas and points of view
which may work to exclude the liberating influence of other disciplines. [6,
McCluskey and Worley, 1974]. If we wish to encourage the development of
these liberal education skills, certain emphases upon a small collection of
concepts within settings of controversy will provide greater contributions to
the students than simply presenting an encyclopedic list of discipline-based
concepts like that which is provided in most principles texts.

One major criticism of this approach is that a handful of concepts is not
sufficient foundation for professional training. I can think of two responses to
this charge. First, professional training should not be considered as a goal of
general education. The basis of general education should be the pursuit of the
liberal skills which will enable students to integrate the content that they will
be taught in their general education courses and elsewhere. Second, even if
professional training is considered to be an important objective of general
education, one should note that liberal education recognizes that useful knowl-
edge is comprised of those concepts or processes which contribute directly to
decision-making skills [3, Bruner, 1960]. To treat knowledge solely as a body
of information or principles, the learning of which is presumed to be intrinsici-
cally rewarding, is futile and wasteful.

Although all liberal education produces results which contribute to profes-
sional training, it cannot be claimed that specific knowledge required for
occupational achievement necessarily aids the acquisition of any of the skills
enumerated above. In fact, if you reflect for a moment on the content of our
most popular curriculum materials, you will quickly recognize that they are
directed at the most elementary and passive areas of the cognitive domain. [2,
Bloom, 1956].

Another equally important reason why general education courses should be
directed toward the learning of the liberal education skills and not toward
preparing majors is the knowledge explosion [4, Gladowski, 1973; 7, McInnis,
1971]. Although I do not have complete confidence in the accuracy of such
statistics, we are all familiar with the rough outline of the recent growth of
knowledge. The amount of technical research doubles every ten years; approx-
imately 100,000 journals are now being published in sixty different lan-
guages; at its present rate and form of accumulation the Yale library in the year
2050 would have to be as large as the city of New Haven to contain its
holdings. How can we hope to teach knowledge about the social sciences that
will prepare our students for the 21st century when much of that knowledge
does not yet exist? However, how can one argue that the skills of liberal
education will be any less functional in the next century than they are now?
The social sciences are eminently amenable to learning these skills, but only
when what we teach is explicitly directed toward that purpose.

The liberal education skills can be taught very successfully in a principles
course by focusing on a relatively small group of concepts that you consider to
be vital to the understanding of your discipline. This task is certainly a
controversial one which will inevitably cause disagreement among col-
leagues. Nevertheless, choices must be made. The instructor should try to
operationalize those concepts by demonstrating how they can aid one in
deciding what conclusion one could reach on a given controversy.

In economics I attempt to accomplish this task by identifying three basic
paradigms: conservatism, liberalism, and socialism; and seven basic
economic goals: growth, fair income distribution, economic security, full
employment, prices stability, consumer sovereignty and economic freedom.
By establishing an understanding of the different economic paradigms, an
instructor can develop an appreciation of why reasonable people can differ on
how to solve an economic problem. Specifically, if we identify a controversy
like "should President Carter cut taxes to stimulate the economy?" my stu-
dents would attempt to analyze that question first by identifying the particu-
lar set of economic goals that each of them individually intends to pursue.
Within each set of goals, the students would use such basic economic concepts
as opportunity cost, externalities, market system, collective decision-making
and market power to assess how well one might expect a tax cut to accomplish
those goals. This process can embody all the elements of liberal education
which I outlined earlier.

In like manner, an entire course can be developed by following the basic steps outlined in the above example. First, the course subject matter should be developed around controversial and conflicting materials. Secondly, the students should be taught at least two paradigms to permit them to search for alternatives. Also, by establishing a list of goals, the students can note how the different paradigms pursue different combinations of goals. Thirdly, emphasize a handful of concepts which are essential to your discipline for the purpose of attempting to choose between the paradigms.

To demonstrate this point further I would argue that the distinction between an allocation process achieved through a market as contrasted to one achieved through a collective decision-making process is more fundamental to the elementary understanding of economics than are the concepts of elasticity, the multiplier or equilibrium in output and money markets. My basic reason for this choice is the greater likelihood that students will encounter my concepts in other disciplines and in their daily lives once they leave the university. Also, with an understanding of the basic elements of a market a student is better equipped to discuss the likelihood of the success or failure of a program which depends upon the proper functioning of a market.

Overall the basic objective is to teach a course which emphasize learning skills rather than just content, a course to stimulate understanding of basic concepts rather than emphasizing professionalism. If these aims were pursued, the goal of general education could be achieved.

References

Humanities in an Age of Uncertainty

Norman Penlington

The substance of this paper was given at the recent (Oct. 1976) conference of the Association of General and Liberal Studies held at the College of Basic Studies, Boston University.

In the few minutes at my disposal what can I, who am approaching the end of my formal teaching career, tell you who are just beginning or who are midway? Although I have spent a lifetime finding my way in this age of uncertainty I can relate some useful teaching experiences.

First, the instructor of humanities needs knowledge — an immense amount of it — an extensive knowledge of a vast subject matter. At Michigan State, where we teach over a 3,000-year period of Western experience, the need for knowledge is endless. The instructor also needs an intensive knowledge of a person, a period, an idea, or a problem that he can sink his teeth into — the subject that he can write on professionally. I found that the general knowledge of humanities supplied me with bushelsful of insights for my own narrow field of history on which I have written. The instructor in humanities, also, unlike the instructor in most disciplines, should keep up with the significance of what is going on all around him from a newspaper, television, and a weekly journal. All our reading and reflection not only ought to increase knowledge but also understanding of the significance and interrelationships of that knowledge. Furthermore, we have to bring that knowledge to life, to animate it with meaning. For our job is not simply to purvey mere knowledge but meaningful knowledge. Meanings in the knowledge we teach are broadly speaking of three kinds: first historical meanings; accurately to represent a contemporary background of what we are studying. For example, Pericles, "Funeral Oration", cannot be taught or interpreted without a brief explanation of Periclean imperialism and the writings of Thucydides. Secondly, there are universal meanings concerning the nature of human beings: for example,
Homer’s insights on human nature. Thirdly, there is meaning in the lives of instructors and students that explicitly or implicitly reveals itself in teaching.

What do I mean by meaning in life? It signifies that life has a worthwhile quality, and purpose, and a direction that gives satisfaction to the individual. As a product of the Western tradition I would qualify that explanation by adding, with due regard for the rights of others.

Why do I emphasize meaning? Albert Camus asserted in the 1940s that he had seen many people die because life for them was not worth living. From this he concluded that the “question of life’s meaning is the most urgent question of all.”

In ages of stability — like early Roman times, early medieval times, for example, when group values predominated, the question of meaning for most people rarely arose. There was almost no difference between group meanings and values and individual meanings and values because the individual found satisfaction in group values. He did not feel alienated from them or desire to challenge them. A classic description of this placid situation, when group values dominated most individuals, may be found in Walter Lippmann’s Public Opinion — a description of the United States at the time of President Wilson and of the early 1920’s.

Today the converse is becoming the situation. Collective meanings and values in the West are under unprecedented attack from minority groups and individuals who feel that the old meanings are meaningless and oppressive. Many students are aware that they have been indoctrinated with meanings that they disbelieve. Many unable to resolve their dissatisfaction evade the problem of meaning by turning to hedonism, drug-taking, alcoholism, or even violence. Perhaps the situation forces some to seek new meanings; or in rare cases a few may do so deliberately.

To hasten the process of seeking meaning students need deconditioning from the herd. The teaching of humanities should be filled with a genial skepticism but not cynicism: mock the fads and fancies of today and yesterday, but refrain from destroying the faith of students in their capacity to find meaning in life. The cynical professor, on the other hand, may unconsciously be projecting his own cynicism on to students or like Shakespeare’s Iago do so for reasons of self-justification. One way to make students skeptical is to keep looking for basic collective and individual assumptions in every document. This is usually a difficult task for sophomores to find on their own. If possible, elicit the significance of that giveaway sentence, “We must believe this.” The obvious question is, “Why must we?” And the obvious answer is, “Otherwise the basic assumptions of the author’s point of view would be undermined.”

It follows from the foregoing that if meaning is essential for life we must find it in the documents we teach. We can teach documents where the discovery of meaning is the key problem in understanding the document: Homer’s Iliad, Augustine’s Confessions, Dante’s Divine Comedy, Goethe’s Faust, etc. In other words, what is being suggested is the teaching of the Socratic Doctrine of “Know Thyself,” and the raising of Montaigne’s question, “Is that true?” Montaigne meant, are a document’s basic premises true? And by extension, is the document true to the nature of man?

Let me illustrate with Dante’s Inferno. One of our books of readings (Karl Thompson’s Classics of Western Thought, Vol. II) contains some of the cantos of the Inferno. I teach the poem as a kind of depth analysis and as an example of
the positive mystic way. The *Inferno* marks the beginnings of Dante's vision of that way. In the *Inferno* Dante must first face his own sins, his potentiality for sin, his own false meanings, and the meaninglessness of his own life before being ready for purgatory. Several times Virgil, representing Classical Reason, commands Dante to look at the sinners in hell. Since the *Divine Comedy* is Dante's own vision he has to look at the hell in his own being. Dante as everyman, having followed Virgil and become aware of his own sins and the possibility of their expression, is now ready for purgatory. In purgatory he will be purged of his sins and false meanings and made ready to progress in paradise.

To encourage students to search for their own meanings, my teaching also tries to avoid a pattern-imposing approach; it follows an existential one, that is, knowledge is regarded as a living reality — like a Platonic dialogue. For example, after an historical introduction to the background of a document, I try to confront the students with the living, existential truth of the document. In other words let the document speak in its own language, as far as possible, with a minimum of interpretation from me. It may be necessary to identify with the author in order to expose a student of the raw power of a classical document. But you may well say, is not the raw power of a great author above their heads and perhaps too much for them? Of course much of Homer, Shakespeare, Goethe, Nietzsche, T. S. Eliot, etc., etc., is above their heads. But is it not the task of the Humanities instructor to bring an otherwise obscure passage to life by means of modern comparison and vivid illustration?

For example, many of you will recall one of the passages of Plato's "Phaedo" where Socrates says that the soul of the true philosopher must be "gathered into itself" and that the soul should not be too much tied to the body. No doubt many students think of that idea — if they think about it at all — as a bit of irrelevant Greek folklore. But Socrates' analysis resembles almost exactly Jung's idea that growth in maturity consists in absorbing one's projections. That is, your soul, your psyche, your life cannot mature so long as you have a crush on something or someone. (Excuse me, a projection on something or someone!) In this explanation do you notice that a difficult ancient idea has been explained by a modern one — itself difficult to many students and in turn explained? These comparisons will thus enable many students to see their own problems mirrored in the great writings of the past.

So far we have discussed three characteristics of teaching humanities: the necessity of knowledge, of meaning, and of an existential approach. A fourth characteristic is the necessity of a humanities instructor to speak in vivid, simple vocabulary without cheapening the profound ideas of the document being taught. The ideas and the depths of the documents we teach are difficult enough without our students having to hack their way through lifeless jargon. The complexity of our documents must be presented in utter and accurate simplicity. We should speak "natural language," not jargon language. Natural language is not only more interesting to listen to and to comprehend but is also more accurate than jargon. My authority for this statement is the atomic physicist, Werner Heisenberg. In his Gifford Lectures of 1958 he spoke as follows:

"One of the important features of the development of the analysis of modern physics is the experience that the concepts of natural language, vaguely defined as they are, seem to be more stable in the
expansion of knowledge than the precise terms of scientific language, derived as an idealization from only limited groups of phenomena. This is, in fact, not surprising since the concepts of natural language are formed by the immediate connection with reality; they represent reality. . .”

“Keeping in mind the intrinsic stability of concepts of natural language in the process of scientific development, one sees that — after the experience of modern physics — our attitude towards concepts like mind or the human soul or life or God will be different from that of the nineteenth century, because these concepts belong to the natural language and have therefore immediate connection with reality. . .”

Following Heisenberg, therefore, humanists should avoid the “precise terms of scientific language” because they are an “idealization from only a limited group of phenomena” and use “natural language” because of its “immediate connection with reality.” We learn natural language from everyday speech, literature, poetry, history, religion. Thus by our use of natural language, our presentations will be more accurate, more interesting, and more vivid.

There is a second reason for our cultivation and use of natural language. How can our teaching and writing exhibit accuracy, interest, and vividness if every time we open our mouths a cliche drops out? It is true, of course, that we must first learn to recognize a cliche. This means that early in our academic careers we must learn to write good prose well, that is, with accuracy, conciseness, and grace. Every young instructor, assistant professor, and anyone else whose English style needs improving, which means all of us, need practice, continual writing. It has taken me 45 years to learn such ideas and style as I now have, and I am still learning. Incidentally these few remarks of mine today required re-writing at least 10 times. Surely a large part of Representative Barbara Jordan’s effectiveness lies not simply in the power of her thought but in the magnificent language with which she expresses that power. Therefore I suggest, nay I urge all of you, to take a summer off from regular work to do the exercises in a good style manual, to study how great authors learned to write, and to learn what constitutes good style and why. Among other consequences of that summer’s practice and study of style will be that your comments on students’ essays will be terse and tactful, fresh and incisive.

Let me conclude with an account of the greatest teaching experience in my life. Last year and this year I taught Carl G. Jung’s autobiography, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, (Vintage), which I believe will come to be recognized as one of the great autobiographies of history. Last year I taught it first to 7 honor students — all 4-point— an engineer, a mathematician, a journalist, a musician, etc. These students were utterly cynical about politics and the mass media, but they did not boggle at Jung’s report of “exteriorization” — a knife split in a drawer because of emotional forces. I was astounded at their enthusiasm, which appeared both in discussions and in essays.

Last spring I introduced the same book to my three regular classes with the same enthusiastic result. Three students said it was the most interesting book that they had ever read. Two students said they, like Jung, had two personalities: an extravert one and an introvert one. This was not something they could reveal to their parents? One unexpected result of their studying Jung was student recognition that one of the great men of our time had the same
kind of difficulties in his childhood and adolescence with his parents as students have with their parents. They also continually complain that their parents do not understand them. Jung, who had 8 uncles who were clergy-men, described how his father, who was also a clergyman, prepared him for confirmation and encouraged him to believe that it was to be a great experience. The service bored him to death. How many of our students have been confirmed or bar-mitzvahed to boredom? Thus Jung’s autobiography was a book which students could identify with fully, but which left them free and gave them courage to be their most creative selves.

This age of doubt at the collective ideas and feelings of our day makes it possible for a courageous individual to break from the herd to struggle for his creative best, and having reached that best give back the fruit of his best to mankind. In other words, as the Chinese say: CRISIS EQUALS OPPORTUNITY. The study of the humanities is one way this may be done. It is one of the tasks of the instructor of humanities to help students begin reaching for this goal. But we can only really do so if we see its value and are doing it ourselves. Broadening the meaning somewhat of the saying of the great Spanish mystic, St. Dominic, and the motto of the Dominican Order, our task is “to contemplate and to pass on to others the things contemplated.”
Testing in the Arts:  
Aesthetic Perception  
Is a Part of Human Intelligence

Warren Sylvester Smith

Simply stated like this, who would argue about it? The recognition of forms and patterns — visual or aural — the sensitive distinction among colors, the interpretation of movement or gesture — all of these are patently human accomplishments, and mastery of them is generally recognized as evidence of a kind of superiority. The statement would seem more commonplace than revolutionary.

But, as with many a principle honored in the abstract, putting it into educational practice would be revolutionary. Although the notion of measuring intelligence is no longer fashionable, our aptitude and achievement tests do imply two major facets of intelligence: quantitative and verbal.

On the basis of testable skills in these areas students are rated as being at certain grade levels, and accepted for higher education, and for entrance into graduate or professional schools. There can be little doubt that the sheer testability of these skills has already influenced the nature of all our institutions for generations to come. No one apparently is going to demand of our future leaders that they be sensitive to rhythms or dynamics or the organization of space, but you may be sure they will have undergone on many levels sophisticated examinations in language and computation. And this at a time when young people are absorbing more and more information by direct perception of sights, sounds, and movements. I am referring not only to the obvious intrusion into our consciousness of television and films, but to the subtler encroachments of packaging, advertising displays, architecture and
environmental design, art galleries (including Woolworth's), music (stereophonic, quadraphonic, or whatever all-enveloping sound is yet to come), and picture publications from Penthouse to the deceptively misnamed comic books. Are we to have no grammar by which to comprehend these experiences, no guides as to how to perceive them?

The probable reply of the orthodox educationist would be that increased attention is being given to these phenomena, and that their importance to society is recognized; but since they are, strictly speaking, neither teachable nor testable, they lie beyond the range of the central educational process. The fine arts are, he would assure us, the flower of our culture and should be encouraged. The arts of the past can be "studied" — that is to say we can learn of the lives and times of the artists, stories of the development of music, of painting, of theatre, of the dance, and so on. It is proper, therefore, to consider them as illustrations of the culture of their times.

In all these approaches, the arts become subsidiary to the formal disciplines — to literature, to history, to sociology, to psychology. The position of the artwork itself is rarely central. Masterpieces of the theatre, as a flagrant example, are tamed for classroom consumption as English literature. Now and then, perhaps, under an unusual teacher, art or music — even more rarely dance — will become a real experience in the classroom. When such an unlikely situation does occur, it is probably for a small minority who are presumably learning how to paint or sing or dance. Similarly something vital may occur in the rehearsal process for a play. But as far as responding to the arts, students may as well be told, "You're on your own. You get only incidental help from the establishment."

It should not be surprising, then, that young people on their own often do acquire remarkable sophistication in the arts that naturally appeal to them — for the most part, contemporary ones. In the arts of the film, pop music, and the comic book they could almost certainly teach their teachers. But because they are often grossly ignorant about the arts generally, and have had no formal opportunities to respond to them, or to give thought to values and standards, their sophistication is of questionable use to them, in their own cultural development. All this reveals a tragic, if understandable, lack of comprehension on the part of educators as to what the arts really are, and what part they are destined to play in any future society.

Let me make a modest beginning by challenging the notion that response to the arts is not testable. Here we face immediately the lack of a basic grammar. When we mention "arts" the educator is likely to assume that we must deal straightaway with interpretations and values. We must say that this painting has "survived," implying that the one that has not survived is hardly worth looking at; that this is "good" music, implicitly relegating the "other" kind to a lower level; or that this play is "ennobling," and that one "depressing," and so on. For the assumption is also that it is necessary to determine what an artwork means. It must be declared a symbol for some emotional or social or intellectual quality. In other words, the educator customarily regards the realm of the arts as a completely affective world in which he has no right to dictate the "proper" response.

As to this last, he is, of course, entirely correct. But perception precedes interpretation and value judgment — or should — and aesthetic perception is at least in part a cognitive process, and is consequently as testable as any other humanistic discipline. We do not, after all, in language testing, ask whether Wordsworth is better than Keats. We ask, primarily, whether the student can
comprehend what he reads. In any kind of formal testing, we cannot escape entirely from the world of words, and even in testing for aesthetic perception it is necessary to tie some commonly accepted terms to the art response in order to ask the essential questions: "Do you see and hear what is there?" and "Do you have a name for it?" Such an approach does not eliminate interpretation and value judgment, but it properly postpones them, and it introduces to the student a basic aesthetic grammar, a set of tools with which to deal with the audio-visual phenomena that surround and may possibly overwhelm him.

Over the past decade I have been developing a pattern for such testing as part of a basic undergraduate course in the arts—a mass course for the general consumer. My testing assumes an elementary vocabulary of art terms, but very little else. It is the kind of testing that might well parallel so-called aptitude tests in other areas. In developing the tests described in this article I have largely followed the same procedures one would use to develop any objective instrument. I checked the range of difficulty of the questions, and I studied computer printouts which gave me correlations between the students' success on each question and their total scores on that test—a figure which expresses the degree to which each question has helped distinguish the high-scoring students from the low-scoring ones. All this has resulted in a "Kuder-Richardson 20 Reliability" of about .80—a reasonable reliability, I am told, for a non-scientific subject.¹

Though these tests were, as I said, devised to measure progress in a specific course of study, I believe that the method could have considerably wider application. Up to the present, I have limited the testing to six general areas: painting, sculpture, music, film, theatre, and dance. And since even in their cognitive aspects the arts always deal in relationships rather than absolutes, all the questions are based on comparisons.

Choose, for example, a pair of paintings that offer both interesting similarities and differences. At least some of the following observations should be applicable:

- The one may be more representational—or abstract—than the other.
- The one may have a more clearly defined focal area than the other.
- The one may be more dynamic than the other.
- One—or both—may contrast biomorphic forms with rectilinear ones.
- One may make more obvious use of value contrasts than the other.
- One may use a wider spectrum of hues than the other.
- One may use colors of higher chroma than the other.
- One may use more linear—or aerial—perspective than the other.
- One may present a more obvious surface-texture than the other.

These are merely examples of the kinds of information that can be perceived and labeled. Different items will suggest themselves for different artworks. Obviously if an unambiguous question cannot be framed—one that would

¹In these matters I have had the help and advice of the Examination Services of the Pennsylvania State University, and especially of its director, Dr. David Stickell.
satisfy any reasonably informed and sophisticated viewer — it should not be used (or, if inadvertently used, should be eliminated on the next round)! Back of each such question lie the larger ones: Can you see what’s there? Can you name it?

Questions can be constructed as multiple choice, but I have been more successful in devising unambiguous questions on a true-false format. Patterns may vary to fit the examples, as

- A uses more linear perspective than B.
- A uses linear perspective, but B does not.
- Both A and B use linear perspective.

Since the testing is for aesthetic perception and not for reading comprehension or general cleverness, the statements should be as simple and clear as possible, and in no way purposely tricky. I think it helps the student if the two artworks are kept in the same sequence throughout the series of questions — always mentioning A before B. And I try to avoid negatives. The statement will read that A has more of a quality than B does — rather than that A has less or fewer (so that the student does not have to pursue a line of thinking that goes, “No, it is not true that A does not have a high chroma as B”). There should be, of course, some difficult questions, but they should be difficult because the artworks themselves present subtleties that only a quite perceptive eye can see (or ear can hear) and not because the questions are difficult to comprehend.

A similar set of observations may form the basis for comparing two pieces of sculpture. They might include as well:

- The one may make more use of negative space than the other.
- The one may attempt to disguise the texture of the material from which it was made more than the other does.
- The one may be more of a closed form than the other.
- One may offer more textural variety than the other.
- One may be in low (or high) relief as compared to the other.
- It may be obvious that the one is cast and the other hewn.
- Coloration may depend (in one or both cases) on the material alone, or there may be a pigment or patina applied.

Ideally the student should be able to examine the two pieces of sculpture on which the testing is based, but a valid test can be constructed using slides — preferably showing each work from three or more angles. If slides are used, one must be careful to devise questions on topics that can be fairly asked on that basis. For example, it might be perfectly fair to ask a student to perceive the use of a patina on a metal sculpture if he could see the sculpture itself. Depending on the clarity of the slide, it might be unfair to ask him to make such an indentification from the projected image.

In testing for cognitive responses to music, the same process is followed: two carefully chosen selections are played (not longer than two or three

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2The reader who has no reason to contemplate the actual construction of such tests may wish to turn to the last five paragraphs of the article. I have assumed, however, that those who read this as a practical as well as a philosophical approach to teaching in the arts may find some use for the detailed suggestions for each of the sections of the test. WSS.
minutes each), and the student is then presented with a series of questions or true-false statements. Since music is purely a time art, a special kind of memory is required to do well on this test. Though the student may consult the questions before he hears the music, he cannot check back with the work as he could with the paintings and sculptures that remained before him as he pondered the questions. This need for a music-memory results, I have found, in generally lower scores for the music portions of the test. However, this need is so important to a full response to music that it is probably the most essential element to test. If the listener cannot remember anything about the first selection by the time he has listened to the second one, a low score is probably valid. What sort of information should the music questions be based on?

The principal melody of the one may be more conjunct than that of the other.

The basic harmony of the one may be more consonant than that of the other.

The meter of one (or both) may be consistently duple or triple. (Unless you are testing music students, it will not be helpful to ask for the identification of more complex meters.)

The timbres (or sonority) of the two selections may be markedly different.

One (or both) may contain polyphonic passages.

One (or both) may be essentially in a major (or minor) mode.

The tonality of one may be markedly more conventional than that of the other.

The overall structures may be verse-chorus, ABA, theme-and-variation, etc.

The one may be more developmental than the other.

One may have clearer articulation than the other.

Two film sequences of about five minutes each will furnish the basis for a further series of questions. Though the chosen sequences may be dramatic, I prefer to base the questions for this part of the testing on the more purely filmic aspects, and leave the theatrical elements for the next section of the test.

The one sequence may make more use of the subjective (or motivated) camera than the other.

One (or both) of the sequences may restrict the use of the camera to near-eye-level.

The soundtracks may contain only "actual" or motivated sounds (synchronized dialogue, etc.), or they may contain arbitrary sounds (such as mood music) as well.

If the soundtracks contain music, the films may or may not be "cut to the beat."

One sequence may be markedly more plastic than the other.

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3The American Film, made for the White House Conference of 1965, lines up five sequences from, presumably, the best American film directors. These offer some satisfactory choices.
One may be more organized along a conventional time sequence than the other.

The editing may achieve a faster rhythm of shots in the one than in the other.

Color may be more obviously used for emotional effects in the one than in the other.

Montage may have been a significant element in the composition of one, or both, of the sequences.

Film is the art form that is most readily presented in the classroom through its originally intended medium. If a good print is available, and if there is sufficient blackout, one can reasonably claim that the artwork presented is the one intended by the artists. With color slides and recorded music, one can never be absolutely sure, but though they differ in significant ways from the actual artworks, reproductions of art and music probably retain the essential lines, masses, colors, timbres, rhythms, melodies, harmonies, etc., in sufficient approximation to the originals to serve as the basis for valid test questions. Testing for perception of the performing arts offers special difficulties in this regard. Both theatre and dance require as part of their basic contract three-dimensional space and live moving bodies. Perhaps we should therefore invalidate any test for perception of dance or theatre that cannot be based on live presentations of performing groups of professional calibre. Though I have in my own situation access to such groups, I cannot call upon them to perform the exact sequences required for testing at every time and place that such testing is scheduled. I have therefore compromised to the extent of recording the desired theatrical scenes and choreography on video cassettes.

If one must accept such a compromise — and I see no other practical alternative — the recordings should be, as far as possible, "straight" recordings, so that the student does not confuse the art of the dance or of the stage with the art of the film or television. The TV director must be resigned to making a clear record of another art form, contrary as that will be to his or her every instinct and training.

If, then, two dramatic scenes are recorded as in a theatre, these are the kinds of perceptions to be made — and note that they are of a different order from those listed for the art of the film.

The rhythms of speech may be closer to verse in the one scene than in the other.

The movement-pressures on the actors (from right to left, or left to right, or back to front, etc.) may form different patterns in the one scene than in the other.

The actors' movements may be markedly closer to dance in the one scene than in the other.

The mise en scene may be more complete, or more detailed, for the one scene than for the other.

The use of color may be more symbolic or more significant in the one scene than in the other.

The tempo may be more lively in the one than in the other.
There may be more use of properties — or more symbolic use of properties — in the one scene than in the other.

There may be more reliance on verbal imagery in the one than in the other.

The thematic scope may have a markedly greater magnitude in the one than in the other.

For the two dance selections, these would be among the items on which questions could be based:

The one dance sequence may have more of the elements of classic ballet than the other.

The one may be more closely tied to the beat of the music than the other.

The one may rely more on a mise en scene than the other.

The one may make more use of virtuoso solo performing than the other.

There may be more dancing on point (or more entrechats, or pirouettes, etc.) in the one than in the other.

The one may be more closely related to mime than the other.

The one may use the floor as an element in the choreography more than the other.

The one may be markedly more related to ethnic or folk elements than the other.

The one may contain a more obvious narrative line than the other.

Now these, I repeat, are the kinds of questions on which it should be possible for informed people to agree. It does not follow that they are the kinds of questions on which either students or their teachers will want to discourse. It is natural for them to want to place an immediate value on the work, to dwell on its significance, to relate it emotionally to their own lives, and to psychoanalyze the artist. Subjective responses supply, after all, much of the joy of the art experience and cannot be humanly separated from it. But would it not be well if respondents were first more skilled in "reading" the artwork itself, and made more sensitive to the act of perceiving it?

Since this entire process of testing involves considerable trouble, it is fair to ask what good will come of it.

First of all, such testing would add to the existing test batteries an aesthetic factor which they now lack. Whether or not the results would show significant correlation to creative talent or to success in art-related professions cannot be known without accumulating massive data. Certainly the scores of such tests would be more meaningful to deans, department heads, and admissions officers in schools of the arts and various departments of the arts than the present sets of scores which reflect the candidate's skills with words and numbers only. If selections for admission and honors must continue to be made on the basis of testing — and it would seem that this will have to be at least partially the case — then the testing should have some relevance to the discipline. Aesthetic perception does not equal talent, but it is hard to imagine talent developing without aesthetic perception.

But even if such testing is not used directly in selecting or placing students, the student himself is probably curious about how he compares with his peers in the matter of what he can see, hear, and identify in the art experience, and
such comparison may be of practical help to him (and his advisor) in making career decisions.

Finally, what may really be the most significant and lasting reason for administering such tests is what happens to the student in the testing process itself. In the hour or so of actual testing he is made conscious of the process of making aesthetic distinctions. He becomes aware, perhaps, that this is a process that has been going on all his life, but for which he has never been called to account. He is forced to realize that responding to artworks involves a discipline. Some find that they have acquired this discipline unconsciously through a lifetime of exposure to the arts. Other discover that they have absorbed only selected areas. Still others — certainly a majority — discover that this entire world has so far largely escaped them; their formal education has never been focused in this direction; and that to enter that realm will require some effort of their own.
Now at the end of our three-day consultation we look back for a moment to see where we have been and where we are going. When you hear what I say as summary, you may wonder if we both attended the same meeting. Think of it this way — whatever I say must have happened at a session that you missed. As a Republican friend of mine said during the first Kennedy/Nixon debate: “Don’t think. Believe.”

We looked at three serious perennial issues. We quested, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, for definitions. We argued again about the nature and function of disciplines. And we explored, inconclusively but I think productively, the generalist-specialist debate.

While everybody shied away from defining humanities or liberal studies or general education, some essential notions about these complex topics, so much a part of our lives and work, came through in what was said by us all. Let me try a couple of definitions. With appropriate nods to diffidence, let me just say flatly that the definition of the humanities should include at least the following elements: 1) centrality of concern on human beings rather than on structures of society or on the processes of nature; 2) attention to, probably focus on, the individual rather than the group; 3) awareness of the ways in which we know, ever mindful of Whitehead’s dictum that we think clearly in proportion to our own perceptions of how we reach our conclusions; 4)
concern for moral values, whether drawn from God, man or nature; 5) insistence on the obligation to carry knowledge beyond description so that forthright judgments on values, on morality, find themselves comfortably enveloped within the processes of intellectual growth.

This definition focusses primarily on the humanities. So let us move along to the natural sciences.

For the purposes of general education, the natural sciences lay bare the processes of nature, including nature's man, in such a way that man may understand both nature and man, putting man in the context of his surroundings on the assumption that without that understanding man has no identity. The importance of this point, the centrality of the natural sciences within the tradition of general education, within liberal studies, indeed within the humanities themselves, I think has drawn our attention less than it should have.

Social sciences in the context of general studies try the same processes on institutions. But poor social sciences: Johnnies-come-lately, stretched between the other two, humiliated that they cannot match the methodology of the natural sciences and, therefore, tempted to confine themselves to quantification; but on the other hand, ashamed of not having the graceful impulses of the humanities, but knowing that they yield to them only at the risk of contempt from the lads with the hand calculators.

The point that the rich diversity of presentations here at the conference has made is that general education, liberal studies, must embrace all three areas of knowledge, communicating them not as disciplines that are the possession of the elite, but as essential equipment for all people who intend to examine their own lives.

Even as we remained unsettled on our definitions, we played continually with the demands and the limitations of disciplines, and to disciplinary we added multidisciplinary, crossdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and (one I had never heard before) transdisciplinary. In a moment I shall offer you one more for your collection: nondisciplinary.

The basic stem is "the discipline," defined essentially by the historical development of the American university system over the past hundred years. In the old days college was a finishing school for the upper class and for the handful of upwardly mobile whose aspirations identified them with the upper class. Colleges were arenas where polite scholars competed for captive audiences, young men and women who were going to stay around for four years anyway before they took largely predictable routes into business and into professional schools, or into the home. In this comfortable sellers' market, scholarly disciplines developed their programs and their mystiques to suit themselves, and the four-year student weighed their comparative interest or entertainment value confident that society would award him recognition as a degree-bearing, and therefore educated, person when he came out the other end. In this situation the humanities flourished, only rarely challenged, though increasingly challenged, first by the natural sciences and then by the social sciences, all functioning as separate disciplines.

We have seen at the conference ample evidence of how competently the disciplines can serve liberal education. Not enough of you heard Kerr, Livesey, and Davis here at the BU College of Basic Studies talking about their two-year sequence in chemistry, physics, and biology, each part of which is taught as a disciplinary course. The two-year sequence was rich, many-sided, and humanist in the very best possible way. Snitgen at Northern Michigan
teaches a biology course that is unapologetically a biology course, still very much within the tradition of general education. The disciplines are here. They are functioning. They are educative. We do not necessarily need to move to crossdisciplinary or transdisciplinary in order to serve general education.

"Interdisciplinary" covers vastly ambiguous possibilities. It is a currently popular buzz word for a much-respected and, in many cases, highly successful development of new approaches to students when, usually, two people combine efforts and do something jointly. There may be genuine interpenetration of two disciplines. There can be a philosopher and an historian feeding each other, feeding the class, and raising different questions that neither of them would have raised alone. The offering may be joint; but it may also be simply two-layered, and if it is, then students not turned on by one person and his discipline will no more certainly be turned on by two persons and their disciplines in a course that simply duplicates within a single experience the disciplinary interests of two people operating separately from each other even though they may in fact be in the same classroom at the same time and may listen to each other. There is danger in thinking that a course may be innovative, and therefore successful, just because it is "team-taught" (another fashionable buzz word). In fact, it may be simply a Dagwood Sandwich course where you get history this week and philosophy next week. In such a course, the student leans just as much on his own resources in order to make the two interpenetrate as if he had taken two separate disciplinary courses. So, experienced practitioners that we are, we are not instantly overwhelmed by invocations of the words "interdisciplinary" and "team taught."

Nondisciplinary carries the implication that a teacher withdraw from his training and approach a piece of work, not necessarily in his field, as an educated person, bringing to it the perceptions of an educated person without bringing any of his scholarly equipment overtly to bear on it. He simply says, What would an educated person think of this work as he read it? He is now saying some very interesting things to his students. He is saying:

We're trying to make educated people out of you. Do you know what an educated person is? An educated person is someone like me. I can read something intelligently. I don't have to hide behind scholarly skills. I can look at this work, say things about it, react to it, judge it, pull it apart, not because I'm an historian but because I'm an educated person.

You do not say these things quite so arrogantly; indeed, the process says them implicitly. To the students you say:

To all these texts that we give you in college, these great things to read, these great things to look at, you too can bring all your resources. You don't have to be an English major to read a play of Shakespeare, pull it apart, analyze it, enjoy it. We do it. We're not Shakespearean scholars. We do it, We're relaxed. Come on. You can do it too.

We say that. We also say that when they make judgments on any text or on any situation that requires a decision, they are not now or in the future ever going to have all our disciplinary equipment to call upon. Let them become ready, then, to behave like educated people.

There is an interesting way to push this nondisciplinary notion one more step. When you team-teach with somebody and the text is squarely in your field, let him lecture on it. At the level of general education there is no need for
your bringing information that only you have because you are an expert. The students do not need that. Let your colleague make the presentation. It will be good for his education. It will undoubtedly be good for your humility. And it will prove a more exciting experience for your students.

Implicit in this discussion of nondisciplinary and explicit in many seminars here is the recognition that discipline, transdiscipline, nondiscipline are not the real issue. The real issue is the quality of teaching, the quality of the perception that goes into the teaching, and the willingness of us all as professional academics to lay ourselves bare and not hide behind the arcane vocabulary that we develop to bewilder each other. Remember Snitgen’s biology course at Northern Michigan: Let students touch fundamental processes in biology, in physics, in chemistry. Let them touch greatness — in the lab, in the art gallery, in the Federalist Papers. One of you sent out an important signal on this topic: We should remind ourselves to be humanists. We can communicate humanist values even better by what we are than by what we say. We falter on this virtue when we deal with our colleagues in other areas, and we falter even in our relationships with each other. To paraphrase Nietzsche on Christianity: Don’t talk to me about humanism; show me some humanists.

Much of what I have said about disciplinary and nondisciplinary spills over into the third topic that ran through our seminars: the gap, or the conflict, between specialists and generalists. We have said so much on this topic to each other that we know pretty much where we stand. Let me just say that there is much to be said for both generalists and specialists. The specialist has an intensity in his attention that is enviable and that is an antidote to the danger of doing too many things slightly well. The specialist, at least in part of his personality, is tending toward depth and excellence. He should not be faulted for it. The generalist, on his side, is obviously dealing much more realistically with the students where they are, for they simply do not share our scholarly interests. Nor should they. If they all shared our scholarly interests, they might start pouring into the profession, taking our jobs; that is not what we want. What they want, in their best moments, is to touch greatness in the world and to understand fundamental processes, to learn how to analyze them, how to deal with them, how to talk and to write as part of a literate generation. The generalists attend to this hunger, eagerly and, I think, significantly.

These three issues — the problem of definition, the function and dysfunction of disciplines, and the tug-of-war between generalists and specialists — these are the issues we have weighed and argued about (argued rather amicably, for we have been sort of a friendly group).

Along with friendly banter and spirited exchange on topics that always stand at the heart of the Association’s agenda, we kept ears cocked for hints on technique. In one area, critical thinking, the conference was host to a splendid presentation. In a second, skill in writing, we were all curiously reticent; but I did hear one useful hint over coffee.

Brown from Bowling Green was the featured speaker at the most stimulating session I attended. He was talking negatively about the existing models of critical thinking. The difficulty about the current emphasis on teaching critical thinking, which is becoming a vogue across the nation, Brown said, is that fundamentally what is taught is a “passive process” of naming the elements of critical thinking: deduction, assumption, inference, interpretation, evaluation. You put up a model and let the students pull it all apart, identifying the elements as they go along, but never integrating their skill in this process with
everything else that they study. Brown wants to plunge the process of critical thinking directly into substantive material — Brown is an economist by trade — so that rules are tools and not simply the content of a separate course. Teach form and content simultaneously. Identify questions; reorganize them for decision, make the decision on a basis that can be rationalized and defended. Brown has offered to share his materials with anyone who writes to him.

We talked curiously little about helping our students to learn how to write, perhaps because we know that step one might be to learn how to write better ourselves. Yet we know that writing must be viewed as something that you never stop learning. It is possible to learn how to write well. It is possible to help other people learn how to write well. And it is even possible to help other people learn how to help still other people learn how to write well. I heard only one optimistic foray on this topic: at Loyola University in New Orleans, they have borrowed Brown University's developmental writing program, and Johnson from Loyola claims fabulous success in taking people who are very unhappy about teaching writing and, within six weeks, substantially converting them into being tolerably good writing teachers. Every glimmer of success should hearten us all. But, as I said, Johnson's comments on writing were the only ones I heard all weekend.

Let me ask and answer where we go from here. First of all — and I have the permission of my host to turn this into a taunt — I think that we as professionals in general education are inadequately open to science. In fact, we have maintained a hostility to science. The hostility is deeply based in ignorance, and we tend to be supercilious about our ignorance. In my experience (including my experience at this conference), there are substantially more scientists who can find their way about humanist topics than there are humanists and social scientists, but especially humanists, who can find their way around science. We must be as open to science as scientists are to us. You may not think that is a very high goal; but it would take us many steps past where we are now.

Second, I think we must heed the charge of Pill from Oklahoma State (in what must have been the wittiest performance here) that universities these days "lay on the altar of general education many prayers but few sacrifices." He warned that general education might become the formula for creating the Ugly American, for as electives get gobbled up in one way or another, general education is finally called upon as a catch-all, a three-hour "transfiguration course" that carries all the weight of making decent human beings out of students. He feared that we are becoming increasingly parochial even as we seek greater universality in general education courses.

Third, it seems to me urgent to remind ourselves of what Brown from Bowling Green was telling us: Meld form and content to avoid being caught in technicalities, in accidents of our profession, for our goal is clear perception of the important ideas in the sciences and humanities.

And now a last word that falls under suspicion because it looks as if I am paying for my dinner. Nonetheless, I must say, on my own behalf but perhaps for most of you too, that the BU College of Basic Studies was a splendid place for our meetings because the College has faced up to most of the issues of general education and has dealt with them provocatively and productively. By being here, we are able to drink in a little of the aggressive confidence that the faculty and the dean feel: things are working here — and working well.

Thursday at dinner we had a substantial dose of Kant, even though he was never named. Today let me try you out on some Pascal, specifically Pascal's
wager about God: If he assumed there was no God and in fact there was no God, he gained nothing. If he assumed there was no God and in fact there was, he was in the soup for all eternity. Now suppose he assumed that there was a God and in fact there was not, what has he lost? He has lived a good life. And if he assumed that there was a God and in fact there was, he was golden. So we too: We must assume that the liberal arts and general studies have a great future and that we shall help create that future. If we are wrong, we have lost nothing, for our lives will be full of what we value dearly. But if we are right, we shall have helped create that future. The liberal arts are worth that easy gamble.

There will be no opportunity for public questions because the structure is so fragile that if you huff and you puff you may blow the house in. But, like Jimmy Carter, you may have two minutes for rebuttal.
The ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES was founded in 1961. It represents no particular doctrine or dogma other than the firm conviction that a good general education is one of the signs of liberally educated men and women. The Bylaws state that it shall "serve as a forum for professional people concerned with undergraduate general and liberal education in each of the several divisions of the curriculum."

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