

RELIGION AND HIGHER
EDUCATION

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1. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

"No education can reach depths of understanding or profound wisdom that is not rooted and grounded in history."⁽¹⁾

1.1 Confucianism

It is easy to forget, when we talk about English, German, American models that there is an unbroken tradition of education and scholarship in Asia that goes back thousands of years and was interrupted only in our own day. The Confucian scholars jealously and effectively guarded the classical Chinese tradition and held the Chinese society together for more than two millenia. China was doomed to be invaded over and over again but each time the conquerors had to turn to the scholars to administer their ill-gotten gains and soon the conquerors were the students.

1.1.1 Chinese Administration

As Toynbee points out,⁽²⁾ these Chinese educators were imbued with the ethical and social ideals of Confucianism, the establishment, which thus perpetuated itself. The same was true of Muslim and Christian universities where men were trained for the three professions, Church, law and medicine. In the Christian tradition law was sharply divided between canon (church) law and secular law. Not so in Islam, not even to this day. But in both traditions law included administra-

tion which was the heart of the Chinese system. It should be remembered that in all three there was no thought of "popular" education. An elite was trained, chosen more by family rank and tradition than by merit.

1.1.2 Static Societies

In all three traditions the societies were static, held within the rigid framework of a religion or philosophy that was held to be ultimate, immutable, *the* truth, and therefore what was to be learned, was limited, compassable, learnable. Education ended with the granting of the degree. Education and religion were inseparably blended.

1.2 Early Western Universities

Liberal education in the west likewise goes back some 24 centuries to ancient Athens where the Greek sophists handed down the insights of their wisdom to the Latin rhetoricians and grammarians who in turn passed them along to the monks and clerks of the Middle Ages, to the humanists and school-masters of the Renaissance, and so to the universities of today.

1.2.1 Priestly and Utilitarian

In the west, education was not confined to a priestly caste or to the study of sacred traditions as in the orient. In Athens

the sophists trained men in the free city states to be good citizens, share life, be responsible. Much of their education, just as today, was utilitarian. They were taught speech and persuasion, thought and logic. How else to run a state? But it was never *only* utilitarian, and ideas were cherished and exchanged for their own sakes. And, as is always the case, religion saved them from pure utilitarianism. Plato was intensely interested in the *theory* of education, more even than in its application. The Platonic Academy and the Aristotelian Lycee were the real forerunners of liberal education today. Roman education on the other hand, unrelated to its social context, became effete and unreal, with the exception of the law, which was to come down to us almost in a straight line. (3)

1.2.2 Classical Culture and Christianity

Early there appeared a synthesizing between classical scholarship with its emphasis upon form and Greek philosophy with its emphasis upon content on the one hand, and Christianity on the other. Early Christians, the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil, the two Gregorys studied at Athens with the Greeks and the two traditions developed together and intermixed. In the west St. Augustine was the great synthesizer of classical culture and Christianity and in the 5th century the synthesis was complete and the stage was set for the founding of the medieval university, and, if you will, our contemporary universities up to and including Chulalongkorn and Silpakorn.

1.2.3 Eastern Universities & Barbarian Invasions

In the east, in the Byzantine culture, the synthesis between the Greek and the Christian culture, between Homer, Plato, the Bible and the Church Fathers, was swept together in the Palace School (University?) in Constantinople. This institution opened in 425 and lasted for 1000 years.

In western Europe the barbarian invasions required a different response and in order to preserve some semblance of the fading culture moral teaching was necessary to keep the culture from total collapse and to prevent the Church from being absorbed by the invaders. Once again religion and higher education were one and inseparable.

1.2.4 Predecessors to the Medieval University

Until the 12th century most learning took place in monasteries. Parallel institutions, Cathedral schools, trained priests; These school programs consisted of the "three" (grammar, rhetoric, dialectic or logic) and the "four" (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music). Encroachment by laymen within both monastery and cathedral school during the 9th to the middle of the 11th centuries had lowered the standards of education.

In fact, during the 9th and 10th century education was really under siege, by the Moslems from the south, ravaging most of Italy including the Basilica of St. Peter, the Hungarians from the East, and the Vikings and Norsemen who hated the

Christians more than either of the others, with their narrow boats that could navigate the rivers and seas, pillaging, burning libraries for which there could never be replacements (it took six months to produce one book). How did education survive at all? For two reasons: a common language, Latin, and the fact that the teacher was the school.

1.3 The Medieval University—Paris, Oxford, Bologna

By the 12th century the stage was set for change. "Life and education began to come alive," as Toynbee put it. (4) It happened first in the west, as we have seen, and then spread, with science and technology, throughout the world. The west had gone to the east, with its crusades and its caravans, and the east had come to the west, bringing Arabic "science". It seemed to converge in Paris where the great Abelard, sometimes called the father of the modern university, drew scholars from all over Europe. A brilliant dialectician, a great teacher, some say the greatest, he introduced the concept of reason and syllogism that paved the way for Thomas Aquinas and the medieval synthesis.

It was a period of intense creative activity, it marked the rise of communes, new religious orders, the great cathedrals, new institutions, and the involvement of higher education with social and educational problems. From this period of bubbling excitement there emerged two institutions which were to overshadow a new Europe, first, the cathedrals, and second, the universities. These universities enjoyed a truly exceptional position in the society

which they served with remarkable distinction, and still do.

1.3.1 University of Paris-Three models

Three models of the medieval university are worth a quick glance. The University of Bologna, the University of Paris, and Oxford. At the university of Paris all disciplines pointed to theology, "the Queen of the Sciences." Paris developed because of the discovery and revival of Aristotelian writings exhumed from the oblivion of the "dark" ages, the renaissance of Roman and ecclesiastical law, or civil and canon law, the rediscovery of the writings from the Greek medical tradition, the close connection with the Moslem culture following the crusades, and the rise of the guilds, which is to say the rise of institutionalism, which remains the hallmark of the university to this day. As a matter of fact the University of Paris was little more than a corporation of "masters" or teachers who were important, not the school. The University of Paris specialized in theology and students came from all over Europe to study, not at the University of Paris, but with a particular teacher, Peter Abelard above all. Four fields of study were open to them: theology, canon law, medicine and arts.

The university gradually developed into an institution of course, first through the codification of unwritten laws, then through the act of becoming a corporate body with the right to sue or be sued, then with the acquisition of "the great seal" the authority to borrow money, and finally, with the acquisition of *officials*, administration.

1.3.2 Faculties

Within the medieval synthesis the Christians and the Aristotelians found comradeship and the barbarian west was drawn into a new chivalry. The Christian way of life was renewed and raised to a higher intellectual plane. "Nations" were the predecessors of what we call today "colleges or "faculties". At the University of Paris these nations were organizations of masters. At the University of Bologna they were organizations of students. From these nations there arose the tradition of universities solving their own problems without the help of local magistrates, police, gendarmes, or soldiers. The college applied their own discipline, and the "town" stayed out of college matters. By the second half of the 13th century students were sharing in the election of the rector and in general administration and policy. It is amusing to note how progressive some universities in the west consider themselves to be today when they include students in the administrative process.

1.3.3 Student life, student rules

The "proctors", were very important, had much to do with the determination of community life and morale, were elected by students, disqualified for campaigning on their own behalf, and dismissed from the nation for failure to serve. And on those few words we can cogitate long and carefully. Elections, curiously, were by the "black ball" method which survives in some collegiate organizations today. Each voter had the choice of a white ball or black ball to put into a little hole in a box, unseen. One black ball in the box disqualified the candidate. Rule by unanimity.

At Bologna student rule was even more firmly established. The rector *had* to be a student, not more than 25 years of age, who had studied law for 5 years, was single, a cleric, and a man of discretion, prudence and honesty who carried no weapons! He almost had to be wealthy to assume the post, it carried high status, higher even than a cardinal in the Church. (He had to stay on campus for one month after the end of his term just in case of any irregularities.) Students were required to take an oath of obedience to him and the Rector had the right to impose fines or to dismiss a student for cause. He was, in short, a man of power.

1.3.4 Early Bologna

The University of Bologna, perhaps because of its Italian site, dwelt more upon law, the great legacy of the Roman Empire. Its curriculum was enriched by the addition of a faculty of medicine late in the 13th century. According to canon law the Church controlled education, and while there was more secular spirit abroad in Bologna than in its sister universities, there could be not doubt as to the integration of education and religion.

1.3.5 Oxford

Oxford followed the Paris pattern including the predominance of arts in the curriculum, and the wide range of Parisian intellectual interests. However, Oxford suffered as a gathering place for the wandering scholars of Europe because of its lack of a cathedral school—a handicap which it quickly overcame. It got a boost when the French king ordered the English scholars in Paris to go home during the

quarrel between Henry II and Thomas Becket. Some innovations developed: apprenticeships for older students or "bachelors" and efforts at cooperation through guilds. The great town-gown conflict of 1209 which temporarily closed Oxford gave birth to Cambridge. But Oxford, like Paris, placed primary emphasis upon the study of philosophy at the same time showing more interest in the newer scientific subjects, mathematics, optics, etc. The Franciscan friars, who were to be so influential at Oxford, emphasized religion more than dogma, set a tone of liberal tolerance for the future.

1.3.6 Bologna

Interestingly enough, not until Napoleon disbanded Bologna in 1776 did it get, on reopening in 1798, a non-student professor rector. In the 13th and 14th centuries it required 12 to 16 years to get a degree and the recipient had to be at least 35 years old. The chief text book, of course, was the Bible.

One learned by teaching. The tradition of teaching fellows began during this period. And perhaps no more effective way of learning has since been developed.

Students could enter the medieval university at the equivalent of M.S. III and had to be able to study in Latin.⁽⁵⁾ He was accorded many special privileges—a student had status. He was guaranteed safe transit in coming and going, he was tried in special courts for any offense. He was exempt from taxes. He had the right to strike (in fact the whole university had the right to strike) for any quarrel however trivial. And, having graduated, they could teach anywhere in the world.

1.3.7 Private Colleges

Gradually there developed during the 15th and 16th centuries the private colleges which were to loom so large on the scene, and the rise of strong national governments which were to make possible the rise of great state universities.

1.3.8 Renaissance and Humanism

The center of university life shifted to Italy, of course, during the Renaissance and the rise of humanism. Along with it came a shift in the vehicles of learning, from liturgy and art to architecture, painting, sculpture, to books to themselves. And when the great split between protestant and catholic Europe came in the 16th century only humanism saved Europe from total rupture. There were humanists in both camps, protestant and catholic, Erasmus to Calvin. These men, with their deep religious faith and their intense concentration upon education, assured the survival of higher education in Europe and for the west.

During the 17th century the catholic revival, or counter-reformation, led by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), carried the baroque culture north just as the Gothic had spread south four centuries earlier. Protestant and Catholic humanism shared many things in common, the educated class, the same language, the same book, the same values, "the school and gentleman" which has remained as a paradigm to this day. All of these were to be revived in puritanism, resuscitated in America, and packaged for delivery to Asia in the 19th century.

There can be little doubt as to the influence of the medieval university. En-

rollments were large, in proportion to the population of that day—1500 to 2000 in early Oxford, 5000 to 7000 in Abelard's Paris. While exact statistics are not available, this suggests a proportion of students not totally dissimilar to that of Thailand today. Their graduates became popes, kings and emperors as well as councillors, advisors and tutors to them. They monopolized law, medicine, education, and in time, even the church, and they fathered the very concept of profession.

1.4 Contemporary Universities

1.4.1 The American University

The early American university more closely resembled a religious seminary than a university. The intellectual leaders of the colonial communities were the ministers of the churches. It was the sole function of the universities to train them. Those early colonists who were educated in England brought with them a stern concept of the necessity of the classics and not only learned Greek and Latin but studied in them. It was not until the middle of the 19th century that the university began to think about the possibility of training farmers, engineers, technicians.

Descartes defines two categories of knowledge, the measurable and the unmeasurable, the former consisting of science, the latter of religion. Harvard was more than a hundred years old before it turned from the latter to the former. Founded in 1636, it taught nothing but the classics until its medical college was opened in 1782, to be followed by its law school in 1817. Today divinity school is more like an appendage than a core. Benjamin

Franklin and Thomas Jefferson both had a strong influence in making higher education more practical, more utilitarian. But Greek was still required for admission in the college I went to 35 years ago, and the judge of our little mountain village court always read for pleasure in Latin and Greek.

The "Land Grant Colleges" of which Cornell was the first in the mid 19th century changed all that and along with the influence of the German universities higher education in America took off in a new direction, and the great institutes of scientific study and research began to emerge.

1.4.2 The German University

The German universities played a most important part in the development of the contemporary university, in America and across the world. Early in the 19th century German universities placed heaviest emphasis upon philosophical and scientific research and developed the graduate school more or less as it is today. But even there religion was central. Departments developed and were to be imitated all over the world. Only in this decade have there been some movements to eliminate departments and try to seek more cross-curricular study.

In the German university the professor took over as the central and dominating symbol, the great figure, surrounded by willing and subservient students, reminiscent of Abelard himself. The German university saw the forces of science and nationalism merge, with such a telling effect upon the history of the mid—20th century.

The German system was picked up first in the United States by John Hopkins University but later it spread to all. German higher education was not for the masses. Only 5% of its college age group ever saw the inside of a German university⁽⁶⁾ (as compared to the present figure of almost half in the U.S.A.) and a high price was paid for this elitism in terms of a limited national leadership.

The English, German and American universities all provided models for each other and for the developing world. Clark Kerr (then) President of the university of California, said, "A university anywhere can aim no higher than to be as British as possible for the sake of undergraduates, as German as possible for the sake of graduates and research personnel, and as American as possible for the sake of the public at large."⁽⁷⁾

1.4.3 The English University

The British "red brick universities" prove the flexibility of even the oldest systems, and Michael Young's celebrated analysis of meritocracy as the guiding standard of public service⁽⁸⁾ (and the higher education that must precede it) is illustrated in the movement of higher education from "Oxbridge" to red brick. While the universities of England, Germany and America retain basic characteristics and differences, they are in the process of learning from each other.

I shall attempt no analysis of the Thai system of higher education here where everyone knows more about it than do I, but we could probably agree that it has drawn from all three models, sometimes the bad along with the good.

2. DEFINITION

2.1 Idealism of Definitions

"The university is a Paradise, Rivers of Knowledge are there, Arts and Sciences flow from thence . . . bottomless depths of unsearchable Counsels there"

John Donne

2.1.1 Toynbee

Before proceeding further with our analysis let us attempt, on the basis of what we have seen, to define the university and to examine some of its commonly recognized purposes. Arnold Toynbee says⁽⁹⁾ that "the common traditional purpose of universities in all civilized societies was to educate a select minority for practicing in afterlife one or more of the 'liberal professions' . . . a small elite of individuals whose personal temperament and ability qualified them for being educated to practice certain particular professions which require special gifts and a special training and which, in a society at any stage of social and cultural development, will be staffed by only a small minority of the total population."

2.1.2 Flexner, Newman

Abraham Flexner, for many years Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton, said that "universities contain the roots of the past, the soil, out of which we grow . . . (and contain) the accumulated treasures of truth and beauty, and knowledge, experience, social political, and other . . ."⁽¹⁰⁾ while Cardinal Newman calls us back to an earlier (1888) definition in his great work *The Idea of a University*: "The main purpose of a university is to conserve knowledge and ideas and transmit them to the elite . . ."⁽¹¹⁾

2.1.3 Ortega Y Gasset

All of these definitions imply that the university is a part of the social fabric, not an ivory tower of escape, and they assume that the university has a role to play in social problem solving. They were, in fact, utilitarian, and no stronger tradition survives to this day than that of the utilitarian role of the university. English universities were organs of the Anglican Church right up to this century when the emphasis gradually changed, partly through the influence of Dr. Arnold Rugby, from religious training to character development. This led to the "battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton" argument which was thoroughly slashed by no less a person than Ortega Y Gasset himself when he observed that it is a "fundamental error (to assume) that nations are great because their schools are good. It ascribes to the school a force which it neither has nor can have... WHEN a nation is great, so will be its schools... the same holds for its religion, its statesmanship, its economy.... If a people is bad politically, it is vain to expect anything at all of the most perfect school system."⁽¹²⁾

2.1.4 American Philosophers

By 1900 a new shift was apparent, especially in America, where a midwestern philosopher of higher education could say that "the chief aim of the university is "an intellectual one, and that an academic institution does not consciously aim to make a man religious, political, moral or aesthetic."⁽¹³⁾ This was made even more explicit a few years later by Alexander Meiklejohn, philosopher of higher education at Brown University: The American

college, he said, "is not primarily to teach the form of living, not primarily to give practice in the art of living, but rather to broaden and deepen the insight into life itself, to open up the riches of human experience, of literature, of nature, of art, or religion, of philosophy, of human relations, social, economic political, to arouse an understanding and appreciation of these, so that life may be fuller and richer in content; in a word, the primary function of the American college is the arousing of interests."⁽¹⁴⁾

2.1.5 Wilson and Goheen

This was put succinctly by Woodrow Wilson when President of Princeton University, "The ideal at the heart of the American university is intellectual training, the awakening of the whole man."⁽¹⁵⁾ Goheen, a successor to Wilson at Princeton writing in 1969 could echo Wilson's sentiment when he said in a public lecture that "no one would argue that calculus, or linguistics, or the laws of thermodynamics teach right conduct. Yet on reflection we know that even the most depersonalized of such studies teaches a respect for truth and, when rightly taught, carries along other virtues that can enlighten our powers of judgment and decision—for example, accuracy, perseverance, honesty, imaginativeness, dispassionate reasoning, curiosity, and humility before the unknown."⁽¹⁶⁾

2.1.6 Noah Porter, Deane Inge

Yet it is curious how we seem to be returning to a new understanding or at least tolerance of the definition of Noah Porter, President of Yale, who said in 1878, "The college course is preeminently de-

signed to give Power . . . to think, rather than to impart special knowledge of special discipline.”⁽¹⁷⁾ I heard this precise definition discussed by a group of medical educators within this past year. It is only a short step from Porter to Dean Inge’s, “the knowledge not of facts but of values.”

3. ANALYSIS

As was noted above, the Thai higher educational system drew from the English, German and American models, and in doing so imported some bad along with the good. Perhaps one of the questionable imports was a thoroughly secularized and utilitarian definition of higher education. This has tended to make it vocation-oriented and degree-conscious and may be highly appropriate for a developing nation. Yet, as has been pointed out, every tradition of higher education sprang from a synthesis of religion and learning. While this synthesis showed signs of cracking as early as the renaissance, it held firm nonetheless right through until this century.

3.1 Secularization, Ethical Crisis

At exactly that point in history when religion and higher education were seeking a divorce on the grounds of secularization, Chulalongkorn was born and the influence of western higher education at its most secular entered Thailand. But now, two world wars later, when the assumptions of scientism are being sharply challenged in the west, when the whole value structure of technological development comes up for review, when western culture begins to stagger under the crisis of man’s ethical incompetence to handle his technological

achievements, when we are beginning to raise questions as to how to use what we already know, Thailand is caught with no traditional relationship between religion and higher education to fall back upon and the current separation of religion and higher education may prove to be very costly in terms of Thai cultural heritage and future development.

4. THE ROLE OF RELIGION

4.1 Religious Traditions In The West

The western universities do have their religious traditions to fall back upon, departments of religion have been burgeoning. The chaplain emerges once again as a figure on campus. The divinity school lifts its head in pride once again within the structure of the university itself. The university in the west is prepared to address itself to the complaint of Columbia’s Jacques Barzun: “Science is now organized as a huge superstructure floating above nothing at all-like the dome of St. Sophia.”⁽¹⁸⁾ The western university is able to consider the meaning of religion in a secular world for the combatants or contestants sit together in the same institution where departmental lines get increasingly blurred and when interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary studies are commonplace.

4.2 Religion and Civilization

The survival of civilization is dependent upon the continuity of its educational tradition. A common education tradition tends to create an environment with common moral and intellectual values along with the inheritance of knowledge which

have up until contemporary times been abundantly informed if not monopolized by religion. Education makes a culture conscious of its identity and gives it a common past. Any break in the continuity of the educational tradition involves a corresponding break in the continuity of culture.

There is nothing new in this analysis. Leonardo da Vinci, the very epitome of "the Renaissance man", was a living example of cross-discipline study as he combined his (scientific) crafts and skills with painting, architecture, sculpture, town-planning, engineering, even artillery. He synthesized theory and technique, as did Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, all within a religious framework. Where is the religious framework for Thai higher education?

5. FORECASTS

5.1 Changes in Thailand

5.1.1 The Arts

One can scan the Thai higher educational scene and see wisps, clouds on the horizon, that suggest future trends or possibilities. The growth of the arts, for example. Compare the interest in contemporary or even classical art in the university today with ten years ago. One has to have been removed from it for a period of years to recognize the degree of change. It is significant. "Man is never fulfilled, now or in eternity, until he develops the creative imagination in terms of which he can see the deeper realities of life."⁽¹⁹⁾

5.1.2 Relationship of the University to Society

There has been a dramatic, one could almost say a revolutionary, change in high-

er education in Thailand in terms of its relationship and involvement with society. One need only look at the growth of regional universities, the unbelievable development of a great university in the northeast, with an influence intended to be regional but which now reaches throughout the nation, and the similar development here at Nakhon Pathom.

5.1.3 Student Activism

One can see, too, the rise of student activism. Long foreseen as inevitable, it is now at hand and bodes well or evil for the future depending upon the skill, wisdom and flexibility with which university administrators and their superiors handle the potential. The first and most obvious result of student activism is a new unity. Students tend to see themselves first as students and then as members of this or that faculty or university.

5.2 Directions

5.2.1 Religious Background

This has only just begun. Where will it lead? Again, let us leaf back through the pages and remind ourselves that in the western context religion was always there, in conversation and dialogue with the other disciplines and the students. Early in this century its voice was nearly stilled and at times it seemed to have been "retired" from the university. But history can never be expelled, and when needed it can be summoned like a genie from a bottle. In America at the turn of the 18th century, only three students at Princeton University, (it was the same at Harvard and Yale) professed any religious interest at all. Only a few decades later campuses were ablaze

with revivals and students themselves were carrying their religion all over the world.

5.2.2 American Revival of Religion

Today religion has reached another peak,* only this time, in another mood and age it expresses itself in new ways, In some universities in the west eastern religions are of even greater interest than their traditional ones. Departments of eastern religions flourish and no department of religion is complete without its professors of eastern, middle eastern and sometimes African as well as western religions. To quote once again from Ortega Y Gasset, "A great university must be local, national, and international."⁽²⁰⁾ He was speaking primarily in terms of philosophy and religion. We would do well to heed him. The only alternative to his is a university that is *not* a university at all, but a provincial center for studies that are congenial with local ideals, local religions, local philosophies.

5.2.3 Inclusion of Religion in Academic Curriculum

The future Thai university must find out how to include religion in its curriculum, religion with the full sweep of its grandeur and breadth of its various expressions, religion, as Paul Tillich say, "having to do with man's ultimate concerns." Chang-tsu, 4th century B.C. Chinese philosopher, put it this way, "How shall I talk of the sea to the frog, if he has never left his pond? How shall I talk of the frost to the bird of the summer land, if he has never left the land of its birth? How shall I talk of life with the sage, if he is the prisoner of his doctrine?"

6. CONCLUSIONS

We must face what history teaches as a proven fact, that the dynamics of culture building account for the human condition far more that does biological evolution and genetics, interesting as they may be for academic study and research.

6.1 Services to Society

Like colleges anywhere in the world—Russia, China, U. S. A., Cuba, Kenya, Malaysia, Indonesia, higher education must support and reinforce the society which harbors it. Unless it provides services of an intellectual nature, it will wither, as we noted in the case of Rome and as Toynbee has described in the rise and fall of all cultures of every age,

6.1.1 Education as the Center of Culture

The core of the esoteric knowledge of any given society, as Thorstein Veblen pointed out in his study of higher education,⁽²²⁾ is rated as an article of great intrinsic value, in some way "a matter of more substantial consequence than any or all of the material achievements or possessions of the community. It may take shape as a system of magic or of religious beliefs, of mythology, theology, philosophy or science. But what ever shape it falls into in any given case, it makes up the substantial core of the civilization in which it is found, and it is felt to give character and distinction to that civilization."

6.2 Inculcation of Values

A university cannot avoid responsibility for the socialization of youth, for the transmission of its cultural traditions, and

for ensuring the continuity of the culture by passing on its central ideas and ideals to succeeding generations. This is but to repeat the definitions above. "A discriminating transmission of our cultural heritage is the primary task of education."⁽²³⁾ Can this be done by leaving the priests to study in lofty isolation in their universities while the technicians study in theirs? This is not to deride in any way the training of specialists. That is being done, and well. Nor does it mean to downrate the research and scholarship that illumines our cultural past. Nor does it fail to take cognizance of the fact that much secular learning is taking place in Buddhist universities. But it does mean that all members of a university should be trained as critics, analysts of their society and culture and of its trends and movements and dynamics. This cannot be done without reference to the great religious traditions that inform our values and our underlying assumptions, that determine our definition of "the good" or "the good life", our ideals, hopes, goals. Religion, on the other hand, must accept that the business of the university is the critical examination of everything, including religion. When religion sees the absence in the university of an area of thought or concern, or the exclusion of certain valid concerns, then it must protest, not because it is getting shabby treatment but because the educational task is being neglected. Secularism, uninformed by religion, cannot succeed in Thailand. Or anywhere else.

6.2.1 The Russian Model

No where is this clearer than in Russia, where the university as a training

ground for experts to run an industrial and technological society is based on a single state ideology with little scope for academic freedom, as recent news has so painfully revealed. One wonders whether history has ever produced a philosopher like Marx who was at one and the same time so wrong and so influential. Secularism, the new religion taught by the state, can only serve the state as it seeks to refortify itself at the spring of religion. How can even Russia study its own culture without a fair study of the Russian Orthodox religion? And other religions, as well.

6.3 Other New Movements

These symposia suggest, along with many other indications, among them the rising interest in eastern religions in the west, the increasing numbers of books on religion and inter-religious dialogue, that we stand on the threshold of new movements and new trends here in Thailand. In the west, it was usually the monks who first "taught men" in the words of Plato (Phaedrus II p 35) "to appraise poetry by a purely aesthetic standard." These ancients were the men who found a place in Christian learning for the pure aesthetic. These ancients were forerunners of Silpakorn University.

6.3.1 Buddhism and Secularism

An interpenetration between Buddhism and secularism is inevitable. This scares us. Thai are embarrassed and uncomfortable to find Bhikkus riding cars back and forth to classes, carrying their notebooks, paying their taxi fares, prowling the bookshops, watching the movies,

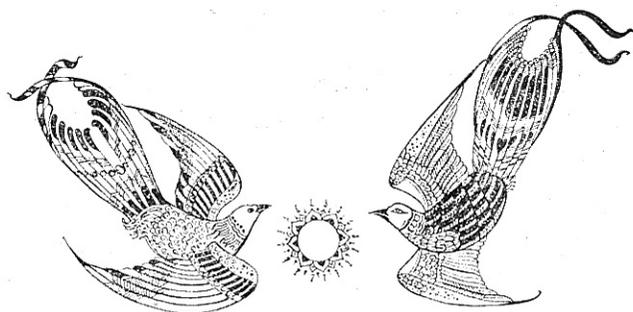
lecturing in the universities, applying themselves to the problems of Thai society. We are afraid that Buddhism will be compromised and become like Christianity if it associates with the world and academe. But would it be a compromise?

6.3.2 "Applied Meditation"

Perhaps it would be not so much a compromise as a return from Lumpini for the Buddhist, a return from the monastery for the Christian, a turning from meditation to participation. Is there such a thing

as "applied meditation?" Why shouldn't we have Buddhist (and any other studies) in our universities? Why should our students be deprived of the richest sources of their own cultural traditions? Why shouldn't Buddhist monks, like the priests of other religions, earn academic degrees and occupy professorships?

Religion and higher education have been married since the beginning of the university itself. It remains for us to see how to consummate this marriage in Thailand.



FOOTNOTES

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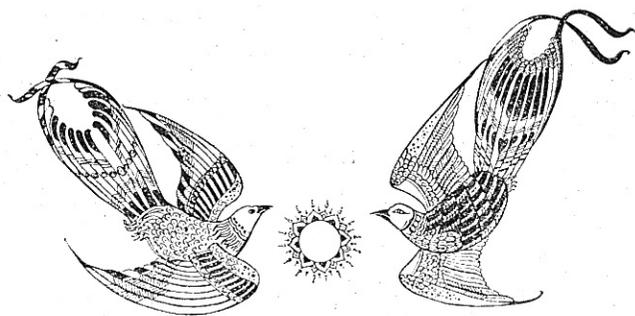
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๑๑ ผู้เขียน

อดุล วิเชียรเจริญ

ปริญญาเอกทางความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศและกฎหมายระหว่างประเทศ มหาวิทยาลัยอเมริกัน สหรัฐอเมริกา ศาสตราจารย์ อธิการบดีมหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

เพ็ญศิริ เจริญพจน์

ปริญญาโททางอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยของซุ้ฝรั่งเศส อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาภาษาฝรั่งเศส คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

Gills Delouche

ปริญญาตรีทางนิติศาสตร์และเศรษฐศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยปารีส ฝรั่งเศส ประกาศนียบัตรชั้นสูงจากสถาบันภาษาและวัฒนธรรมตะวันออก มหาวิทยาลัยซอร์บอน ฝรั่งเศส กำลังทำวิทยานิพนธ์ปริญญาเอกที่มหาวิทยาลัยปารีส อาจารย์ภาควิชาภาษาฝรั่งเศส คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

วิภา เสนานานู

ปริญญาเอกทางวรรณคดี มหาวิทยาลัยลอนดอน อังกฤษ อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาภาษาไทย คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

มนวิภา เจียจันทร์พงษ์

ปริญญาโททางอักษรศาสตร์ สาขาบรรณารักษศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย หัวหน้าหมวดบรรณารักษศาสตร์ คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

สมพงษ์ ชูมาก

ปริญญาเอกทางกฎหมายรัฐธรรมนูญและรัฐศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยปารีส ฝรั่งเศส กอง ๕ สำนักงานสภาความมั่นคงแห่งชาติ อาจารย์พิเศษหมวดสังคมศาสตร์ คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

สมจิต เอี่ยมสุภินิมิตร

ปริญญาโททางอักษรศาสตร์ สาขาการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาภาษาอังกฤษ คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

แกมสุข นุ่มนนท์

ปริญญาเอกทางประวัติศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยลอนดอน อังกฤษ ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาประวัติศาสตร์ คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

อัญชลี ภูวิชยสัมฤทธิ์

ปริญญาโททางภูมิศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยลอนดอนอังกฤษ อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาภูมิศาสตร์ คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

เจตนา นาควิริยะ

ปริญญาเอกทางวรรณคดีเปรียบเทียบ มหาวิทยาลัยทองบงเงิน เยอรมัน ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาภาษาเยอรมัน คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร กำลังปฏิบัติงานในหน้าที่รองผู้อำนวยการ ชีเมส

นฤมิตร สอดศุภ

ปริญญาตรีทางศิลปศาสตร์ สาขารัฐศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่ กำลังทำวิทยานิพนธ์ปริญญาโททางความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประเทศที่จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย อาจารย์หมวดสังคมศาสตร์ คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

วัลยา รั้งขวัญยืน

ปริญญาโททางอักษรศาสตร์ สาขาภาษาไทย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย อาจารย์ประจำภาควิชาภาษาไทย คณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

Ray C. Downs

ปริญญาโททางศาสนศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยพรินซ์ตัน สหรัฐอเมริกา ศาสตราจารย์ อาจารย์พิเศษคณะอักษรศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

ขอขอบคุณ

รองศาสตราจารย์ ดร. เสรีน ปุณณะหิตานนท์

และ

สวนประทีป

ของสภาคริสตจักรในประเทศไทย

ถนนราชดำเนิน

นครปฐม