

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION IN THAILAND TODAY

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I am proud to have been asked to give this lecture. It is a responsibility I have taken seriously and shall do my best to discharge. I am grateful for having been permitted to develop my subject along those lines which seemed, after some reading, to have emerged most clearly. The more I read during these last three months, the more presumptuous it became for me to attempt to speak to the problems and challenges of higher education in Thailand. Almost anyone in this hall could do that better than I. I am a guest in Thailand, albeit a long-time one. It would be inappropriate for me to comment upon politics. Yet most of the problems related to higher education, along with everything else in our beloved kingdom, are related to politics. But while I may be a guest in Thailand, I most certainly am not a guest in this university, but a colleague. It is as a colleague that I shall attempt to bring some thoughts together for our consideration today.

This past April I had the good fortune to attend a stimulating conference on Southeast Asian studies in Chicago. I was amused to hear that an old old theory is circling once again in academic circles abroad that Thailand suffered many disadvantages by not having been colonized during the 17th through the 19th centuries.¹ However true or untrue this may have been in some respects, it most cer-

tainly is not true with respect to higher education which grew up here entirely within the twentieth century with a high degree of relevance to local and immediate needs, responsive to social and cultural demands.

Thailand is quite unlike Africa, for example, with its depressing "social mimicry"² of European education. In some of the developing African countries graduates with honor degrees in Latin, Greek and Ancient History go out to administer provinces having studied neither their own political and economic systems nor their own religions, social traditions or folk-lore. Our Thai universities may have replicated many aspects of western universities, but they have done so with selectivity and discrimination under the watchful eyes of qualified committees and commissions. While neighboring countries tended to follow European models, serving the purposes of colonial administrators while insulating their young from the problems of free national development, Thai universities tended to relate somewhat more directly to national interest and development. While universities for the elite were being planted upon Asian soil, Thai universities were opening their doors to all classes and groups within Thai society by the simple expedient of expanding entrance requirements. It must be granted, however, that limited admis-

sions at lower educational levels inhibits the admission of the under-privileged at the university level.

This (limited) "democratizing" of higher education was made easier by the astonishingly short time within which it all happened—little more than a half century since the founding of Chulalongkorn University. But the Thai quickly made up for lost time, founding new universities regionally in the 50's, granting charters to private colleges in the 60's, "open admissions" on a mass scale at Ramkhamhaeng in the 70's, upgrading teacher colleges the while, until we now have, by some counts (NEC) ten universities in all, enrolling almost 125,000 students in 1975, with another 13,000 students in private colleges, 83,000 in vocational and specialized schools, and almost 2,000 in colleges or institutes under other ministries.³ This is a spectacular growth, although any study of higher education in Thailand is drastically distorted by the absence of any facts or figures regarding police, military, naval, air academies, their recruitment policies, curricula, standards, etc. (We need only look at the number of Thai political leaders during the past fifty years who have come from these academies to see how deficient must be any study of civilian institutions alone.)

The point is this: the explosive growth of higher education in Thailand did not take place haphazardly. The office of University Affairs, which enjoys ministry status, has overseen the development of universities with a careful eye to the place of the university and its role in

Thai society, while the Office of the National Education Commission (NEC), directly under the Office to the Prime Minister, has devoted itself to the long-term policy, planning and integration of all education.

PROBLEMS AND PROBLEMS...

As the system matures, higher education in Thailand confronts many of the same questions that have confronted universities everywhere. How many students should be admitted? Who should they be and how should they be selected? Should the university be engaged in the "moral" training and indoctrination of youth? To what extent should the university be engaged in "public service"? Should the university see itself as a supplier of personnel to industry and government? To what extent should the university be engaged in politics? Should its students? Its teachers? Its administrators? How does content change within the university? Does change in content necessitate change in form or structure? To what extent should the university view itself as the conservator of its cultural and social traditions and to what extent the innovator of social change? Are these mutually exclusive? While these questions, and many more like them, are difficult, Thailand already has the experience and the trained personnel with which to approach them—and to accommodate to change when necessary.

UTILITARIAN ASPECTS...

In a previous paper⁴ I explored the role of the university as an instrument of

society, groups, parties, or factions within society and labelled as "instrumentalism" that condition that exists when a University becomes a tool or an "instrument" of such an outside group. As over against this concept of instrumentalism I juxtaposed the concept of "utilitarianism", the university as useful to the society that couches it. Utilitarianism is the university brought down from its ivory tower, removed from its isolation from the work-a-day world, to live and move and be useful in society.

When the university in Thailand started, as a utilitarian extension of the Royal Pages' School only fifty years ago, there were no lofty concepts of the humanities involved. It would prepare civil servants and it would provide teachers for a developing educational system. Research occupied no place in the scheme of things and teaching was quite isolated from research. It still tends to be. Through endless commissions, plans and programs, the early utilitarianism survived and prospered. Like anywhere else in the world, a person went to the university to secure himself a place on the success ladder while seeking a mate a job and adulthood. The better teachers were not interested in research but in shaping the minds and personalities of young people through aesthetics and/or intellectual discipline.

There were surprisingly few really serious problems. Institutional loyalty was the cement that held things together: students and teachers shared a vested interest in the reputation of the university. Cracks

began to appear in the structure when Thailand "let 100 flowers bloom" during those heady days between 1973 and 1976. Students began to show initiative and ask questions and turn to more active political participation. This was reflected in broader classroom interest and, as I recall, far more interesting term papers. While there have been set-backs, the universities in Thailand emerge as partially independent forces in new social and cultural groupings. They represent a force for eulttural discontinuity between traditional criteria of status and authority.

THE TWO MAINSTREAMS RE-VISITED

Utilitarianism is only one of the streams pouring into our universities from the west. The other is the "academic cloister" the "ivory tower" epitomized in Cardinal Newmans classic *The Scope and Nature of University Education*,⁵ a milestone in the understanding of the aim and purpose of the university. It is most accurately reflected in Oxford and Cambridge and it set the model for the original planning of Tap Geaow, although some of you may know whether that was M.L. Pin's actual intention.

"A university" said Cardinal Newman. "is the high protecting power of all knowledge and science, of fact and principle, of inquiry and discovery, of experience and speculation; it maps out the territory of the intellect, and sees that... there is neither encroachment nor surrender on any side."⁶ He believed profoundly in a "liberal" education and had only

contempt for "ureful" knowledge, at least as a part of the university. Implicit in Newman's philosophizing is the deeper question, is knowledge an end in itself? Or is it simply a means to an end, the end being that of "raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspirations, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political powers, and refining the intercourse of private life?"⁷ Is its purpose if it has a purpose, to prepare a man "to fill any post with credit, and to master any subject with facility?"⁸

LIBERAL EDUCATION- ANOTHER DEFINITION

Thomas Huxley defined the liberally educated man as "that man who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the laws of her operations; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of

a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty, whether in nature or art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself.

"Such an one and no other, I conceive, has had a liberal education: for he is, as completely as a man can be, in harmony with nature."⁹ A more romantic proclamation of the non-existent liberal man would be hard to find. Do you know one?

THE DIVERGENT STREAM- AWAY FROM GENERALIZATION...

We know, even as we quote Newman, that his dream never existed and most certainly never found a home in Thailand. During the last century the liberal arts have moved steadily toward specialization, professionalism, vocationalism and higher education in Thailand has ridden that stream. When Chula was founded general education in the west had already yielded to a new model, best described by Abraham Flexner, a German model which saw the university as a vehicle for research. Two streams: one, the way of general studies, liberal arts, the cloistered community; the other, the research institute, the department, the Herr Professor and his assistants. Said Flexner, "A university is not outside but inside the general social fabric of a given era... It is not something apart, something historic, something that yields as little as possible to forces and influences that are more or less new. It is on the contrary... and expression of the age, as

well as an influence operating upon both present and future.”¹⁰ Just as the rise of science rendered obsolete the “Renaissance man” so did the rise of research and the utilitarian university and forever Newman’s dream of general education and the universal liberal man.

It is wrong to view the conflict between vocational and liberal education as simply the current manifestation of the long-standing antipathy between the sciences and the humanities. To say that the sciences emphasize the empirical and therefore the technological and vocational aspects of education, and the humanities involve the intellectual and hence conceptual aspects is to set up a false dichotomy. Empirical science puts theory to the test of experience, and there is no disputing the intellectual content in theoretical science. While the two mainstreams of higher education, “liberal” and “scientific (vocational)” have a long and unfortunate history of having run their separate ways,¹¹ there have been counter trends. Many trade schools in the west and most science faculties, even engineering and agriculture faculties, have broadened their curricula to incorporate important aspects of the liberal arts. They have sought greater breadth for their students and assumed some responsibility for preparing them to live in harmony with themselves, with their environment and with society. It is quite generally accepted that curriculum planners should include courses

that inspire students to think of people before goals, values before dollars, and perhaps even the spirit before the flesh. Education should make a person competent not merely “to do” but more importantly “to be”, and “skills of being” should have a place in curriculum building right along with “skills of doing.” A synthesizing process has been at work.

This is simply another way of saying that the humanities cannot really be left out of **any** curriculum that pretends to call itself higher education, for “the Humanities are the study of that which is most human. Throughout man’s conscious past they have played an essential role in forming, preserving, and transforming the social, moral and aesthetic values of every man in every age. One cannot speak of history or culture apart from the humanities. They not only record our lives; our lives are the very substance they are made of. Their subject is man.”¹²

It is a matter of record¹³ that a more utilitarian approach to higher education in Great Britain, the birth and growth of the “Red Brick Universities” open admissions, popular education, came about because of the resistance of the traditional universities to the demands of technology.* But even these newer universities did not fully escape from “liberal” education with its headmasterly overtones: “Higher education (should be) concerned with wisdom, development of character and the general development of personality”

* There were many reasons, among them (a) the “brain drain”, (b) limited research following World War II, (c) inadequate libraries, (d) the export of manuscripts, documents, artifacts.

said the Vice-Chancellor of Lancaster.¹⁴ More simply put by the Vice-Chancellor of East Anglia, "Universities produce 'superior men'." The two streams are not so easily kept apart. The synthesizing continues.

There can be no *obiter dictum* in this sensitive and constantly changing relationship between the two streams of learning as they flow through an endlessly changing environment. It is little wonder that universities abroad have been under pressure in the past quarter century to develop new curricula that will provide students with greater opportunities to work out their own curricula. Fads change in educational circles faster than they can be recorded, let alone tested. There is clearly a swing away from the free curriculum at present. Since Thailand was never swept into the maelstrom of free curricula it need not extricate itself from it. Yet that does not relieve us of the burden of constantly scanning the horizon for new developments, sorting them through the sieve of our own experience, and possibly in some cases trying them on experimentally for size. I should like to take only two examples, one from Asia and one from Africa, of attempts to develop new curricula for changing times and situations. Let us look first at China and then at Harvard.

THE CHINA DEBATE

The debate on higher education in China as to the proper relationship between the two streams, general education and vocational education, came into

critical focus with the revolution. The universities were clearly to assume a fully utilitarian and even instrumental role when it came to fulfilling Choe En-Lai's long range economic targets at the Fourth National people's Congress in 1975. You will recall that he defined two stages; the first, to build an independent and comprehensive industrial and economic system in 15 years and the second, to effect a comprehensive modernization of agriculture, industry, national defense, science, and technology. The universities were enlisted to help. The universities had been so sharply criticized that control had largely passed from their hands into the hands of Party officials. Simply to dwell upon their grievances would have accomplished nothing for the professional educators. What to do? They drew up new curricula drawing the universities more closely into utilitarian roles, serving society by crossreferencing practical and theoretical considerations while sharply curtailing the comforts and "corruptions" of an easy university élite life.

The curriculum planners included labor projects in the new program and for it they recruited students of "right quality" and "right mental outlook" instead of children of the élite from the cities. Standards dropped, but the "function of universities is not to train a few graduates to a high level in skills of dubious practical importance but rather to train a large number of individuals over a short period of time in those skills most urgently needed . . . Once graduated they will be assigned not to a post graduate

hothouse or administrative post but to areas where the need for their services is acute. Thereafter they may return to the university after a few years for further higher level tuition or research work"¹⁵

Chinese programs claim success in the dissemination of practical knowledge as compared to those systems where students consider their education only in terms of "ladder climbing". Throughout much of the Communist world, universities tend to be somewhat less important than technological institutions and humane learning less important than technology, and it sometimes appears to those outside of the system that propaganda is more important than learning or teaching people how to think—which in this paper we take to be a prime function of the university.

THE HARVARD DEBATE

The latest re-evaluation of the meaning and purpose of the university as it is reflected in the curriculum itself comes from Harvard University. Harvard has traditionally been a leader in advanced thinking about higher education and its curricula. Their new "core curriculum" is Harvard's first radical curriculum change in more than 40 years and was announced only last month.¹⁶ It was accepted only after four years of scrutiny and (sometimes acrimonious) debate within the teaching staff and many more years before that of mounting dissatisfaction with its freely structured "General Education" program. Harvard's is only the latest of many re-evaluations but it is

significant because it will be studied and copied extensively. What Harvard is trying to do with its new curriculum is to develop a new definition of liberal education at a time when the humanities are on the defensive. A stated purpose is to have its students "acquire basic literacy in major forms of intellectual discourse."¹⁷ What is this new definition of liberal education that Harvard suggests?

1. An educated person must be able to think and write clearly and effectively.

2. An educated person should have a critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves. Specifically, he or she should have an informed acquaintance with the aesthetic and intellectual experience of literature and the arts; with history as a mode of understanding present problems and the processes of human affairs; with the concepts and analytic techniques of modern social science; with philosophical analysis, especially as it relates to the moral dilemmas of modern men and women; and with the mathematical and experimental methods of the physical and biological sciences.

3. An educated person, in the last third of this century, cannot be provincial in the sense of being ignorant of other cultures and other times. It is no longer possible to conduct our lives without reference to the wider world in which we live. A crucial difference between the educated and the uneducated is the extent to which one's life experience is viewed in wider contexts.

4. An educated person is expected to have some understanding of and experience in thinking about moral and ethical problems. It may well be that the most significant quality in educated persons is the informed judgment which enables them to make discriminating choices.

5. An educated individual should have achieved depth in some field of knowledge. Cumulative learning is an effective way to develop a student's powers of reasoning and analysis, and for our undergraduates this is the principle role of concentration.

These "hallmarks" of the educated man differ from the more content-oriented curriculum of continental European universities and from the more traditional American method-oriented "distribution requirement" approach which had students choosing a required number of courses from the social sciences, the humanities and the natural sciences. The new "core curriculum" will require students to select about one quarter of their undergraduate program, several substantive courses (six to eight in all) from a list of 80 to 100 "core" courses in five academic areas: (1) *Literature and the Arts* : one course in literature, one in music or the fine arts, and one in "contexts of culture." (2)

History : two courses. (3) *Social and Philosophical Analysis* : one in social analysis and one in philosophical analysis. (4) *Science and Mathematics* : one in a physical science or mathematics and one in biology or a behavioral science. (5) *Foreign Languages and Culture* : one course. The actual number of courses required will depend upon their major field, but all students will be required to demonstrate competence in a foreign language, writing (one required course in expository writing). and mathematics.

I have chosen to give considerable space to the Chinese and the Harvard experiments because they are so different and because they are both utilitarian in reference to their respective cultures. The Harvard program would appear to have come closer to a synthesizing of the two mainstreams, but each continues quite on its own flowing way.

The drafters of the Harvard program had given careful study to the now famous Carnegie Report on Higher Education of 1973.* It has been quoted and used so widely that the objectives it sets up for a university should be included along with the Harvard program. The objectives of a university are (1) "to provide good educational opportunities for students ; (2) to develop an understanding of society;

* The "Russell Report" in Great Britain, and the "Carnegie Report" in the U.S.A. are the two major critical studies of the contemporary university in this decade. While the Russell report proclaims the functions of the university to be "research and teaching" the Carnegie includes a third function, "Service... advice and instruction to persons and organizations external to the campus.. Cultural advancement... provision of cultural and informational facilities and personnel." It goes on to say that "the activities of a university will be 'relevant'... involved in the local or national community, not only used by the community but will itself use the community as an additional resource for teaching and research."

(3) to obtain academic and technical competence in selected fields; (4) to fulfill appropriate standards of academic conduct; and (5) to explore cultural interests and enhance cultural skills." To which the report adds: "The campus has a **subsidiary** responsibility to provide accountability for the emotional growth of students."¹⁹

The centuries-old debate on the relationship between general and utilitarian education is not ended. The "pure" and the "applied"; the "ivory tower" and the "market place" still vie for position in China, Harvard, the Carnegie Report, Thailand, Africa, Europe, Australia and from this debate come new syntheses, compromises and new patterns appropriate to the various cultures as they move into the future.

THE "USES OF THE UNIVERSITY"

In part II we shall move along from discussing the **meaning** of the university, definitions and historical streams, to a consideration of some of the utilitarian **purposes** what Clark Kerr calls "The Uses of University."²⁰

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VALUES

From a reading of Part I it must be clear that while the purpose of a school or institute may be to train mechanics, drivers, priests, technicians, the purpose of a university is much broader and deeper. Any discussion of purpose leads at once into a discussion of values. Whether we

consider the university as an instrument to be used, or whether we see it with pragmatic and even vocational overtones, the purpose of a university is to nurture those values upon which the social survival depends.

We shall define values as those determiners in individuals or within groups that influence choice and behavior. In placing a higher value on one choice as over against another, priorities are established. Values incline people to devote their time and resources to one alternative instead of another. It is within this definitional framework of values that the university plays its roles.

Exact knowledge, Aristotle teaches us, must precede that most precious of all virtues, wisdom. Clarity concerning those truths that may be deduced from the principles, precedes wisdom. Add to this understanding, and the transcendent values, based upon the realities, begin to emerge. Values form the cornerstone of wisdom.

Values cut through the false dichotomy of "thinking" as over against "doing", or "arts" as over against "science", or "liberal" as over against "professional" or "vocational" training. Values lead beyond "thinking" and "doing" to "**being**". Our primary task as educators is to nurture neither wise men nor artisans, but citizens. Our common life cannot be guided by a science of society nor can it be turned over to craftsmen and technocrats... social good is neither a truth to be perceived nor a product to be engineered. It is... the capacity of person to choose prudently among complex and

always changing possibilities."²¹

Is "the good" something to be *tought*, or *learned*, or *done*? How do you teach "the good"? Does the university attempt simply to *discuss* virtue or does it attempt to *inculcate* virtue and modify behavior? Higher education, say some, should inform students' minds, not form their moral habits. Morality has intellectual content; the university will attempt to illuminate that content by teaching the *history* or *morals* or moral *philosophy*. Knowledge is one thing, virtue another, says Cardinal Newman.²² Knowledge does not control the passions. Moral conduct does. Moral conduct requires practice, not classroom indoctrination.

Some of you will be better able than I to document this from Buddhist writing. Not until I began to read for this paper did I fully grasp how authentically Asian this quality is. I had not been introduced to Makiguchi, the able Japanese educator who lived from 1871 to 1944. A biography of him is entitled **The Value Creator**. He saw higher education as a "value creating" system and he was convinced that the pursuit and creation of values is the ultimate purpose of life.

Nowhere could this be more clear than in Thailand with its ancient system of temple schools in which the teaching of Buddhist ethics occupied such a prominent place in the curriculum. Current efforts to turn the clock back and to revivify temple schools may reflect more romantic wistfulness than realistic possibility. At the same time, the nostalgia for religious ethics is real and immediate.

MEASURES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF VALUES

How do we relate values to the university educational process? How can values be turned from a mere philosophical or ethical word to a concept that has some meaning within the life of the university? There are discernible marks in the growth and development of values as supported by research under Prof. Douglas Heath at Haverford College.²³ One such mark is the ability of the student to symbolize his experience, to reflect upon and foresee consequences as he develops an understanding of himself. Without this first step there is no way to the establishment of a value structure. This first step falls signally within the scope of the university.

Second in the process of developing a value structure comes an awareness of "otherness". The student becomes less self-centered, less prejudiced, less ethnocentric. There is a more empathetic perspective on many issues requiring rational analysis and a greater social sensitivity. This leads to the integration of his thinking, the development of a "holistic" perception with relational and flexible patterns.

In the third place, the student's cognitive skills become more stable. He learns to use reason and judgment even upon a threatening problem. Cardinal Newman called this "steadiness of intellect." John Dewey call it intellect with "its own principles of order and continuity."²⁴

As the final step in the erection of this value structure the student should

emerge with autonomy. He can now use his new skills independently and weigh evidence dispassionately.

THE SURVIVAL OF VALUES

Those things which survive longest from the college years are attitudes and values, not fact and content, along with a sense of community that crystallizes around these values.²⁵ Dr. Rowse of All Souls College, Oxford, said, "into this universe of discourse we can all enter freely at the university, according to our various inflections of mind, interests and aptitudes. We should be always ready to give ourselves a chance, open to these new experiences which will contribute to our growth. These cultural activities are quite as important to my idea of the university as the more normal side of teaching, lecturing, reading, note-taking, writing and examinations."²⁶ Prof. Bowen of Claremont Graduate Schools says, "It is unreasonable to judge the results of higher education on the basis of retained data; it is inevitable that much of the detail will vanish or prove useless.

"The important *substantive* aims of higher education lie in the realm of residues. The residues include the general knowledge and perspectives that enable students to participate in the general culture—for example, to read significant literature, to understand and appreciate the arts, to converse with educated people about matters of importance, to comprehend the news in historical, geographic, and social perspective, to have some basic understanding of science and technology,

and to be at home with religious and philosophical issues.

"Perhaps most important of all, the residues may include the tendencies, triggered by the university, that encourage future exploration and learning."²⁷

In the 19th century, before the secularization of higher education in the west, the purpose of most education was unabashedly to mold character, to make pious, righteous gentlemen. This was accomplished by imposing upon them the discipline required in learning Greek, Latin, math, and even by controlled behavior. The development and the inculcation of values was taken seriously.

THE CULTIVATION OF THE IMAGINATION

The development of a system of values begins with the cultivation of the imagination. Through literary and artistic approaches the student can see the good and the great in the human character and its works. "Imagination is the air in which new knowledge breathes . . . Imagination is not only the core of experience, part of perception itself; it is also the means by which experience is shared. Without it we should stay gaoled in our private darkness. With it we enter into different lives, discover other minds and enjoy what they discover . . . Imagination is the greatest unifier of humanity . . . Imagination melts the boundaries of sharply divided lives and breaks down the cells of excessive individuality in the interests of a more inclusive reality."²⁸ To this George Santayana adds, "I have imagina-

tion and nothing that is real is alien to me."²⁹

There are choice and romantic insights to be shared in the world of the imagination. Coleridge said "the mind is like a garden covered with weeds, (and the business of education is) to prejudice the soil towards roses and strawberries." (Table Talk, July 21, 1830). In his Lectures on Shakespeare XI he says, "in the imagination of man exist the seeds of all moral and scientific improvement; chemistry was first alchemy, and out of astrology sprang astronomy. In the childhood of those sciences the imagination opened a way and furnished materials, on which the ratiocinative powers in a maturer stage operated with success. The imagination is the distinguishing characteristic of man as a progressive being . . ."

Nourishment for the imagination is provided by the fine arts. The fine arts are the vocabulary of the imagination, the means by which it becomes articulate. But the imagination and the fine arts along with it, have a utilitarian function in society that is easily overlooked. The fine arts set the visual tone of a culture. Artists, to at least some extent in Thailand, dictate life and style, perhaps without knowing it and certainly more than anyone suspects. Shelley once said, "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Extravagant at first hearing, but not so absurd when one compares the influence of Shakespears's plays and the Ramakien over the centuries as over against political events and personalities

contemporaneous with them.

Art history is also necessary. It requires thought, comparison, contrast, sharpening and firing the imagination through the accuracy of observation and notation, more even than other history. Sensibilities are alerted, horizons widened as the wanderings of the human spirit are traced through the ages, compared, judged. The student who knows nothing of what has preceded him lacks both the support of tradition and the stimulus of something to transform. What is true of art and the history of art is almost equally true of other areas of the liberal arts. Imagination may be born but it may also be stimulated, sensitized, nourished. This is a direct and immediate function of a university.

THE IMAGINATION AND PRAGMATISM

Such flights of the imagination need not blind us to the continuing pragmatic demands of higher education as it develops especially in U.S.A. and Thailand. The rift between the two main streams of higher education continues and a liberal education unattached to its social context is just as inadequate as vocationalism devoted to materialism. The development of science and technology modified the older patterns established for the humanities. The context of higher education had outstripped the theory. The "socio-psychological" setting began to challenge the older western aestern aesthetic tradition embodied in the aristocratic ideal. In

U.S.A. they turned to land grant colleges* and in Thailand to the Royal Pages School.

A balanced pragmatic approach seems to be required to fit the socio-psychological context of our era. But even as we are seduced by the economic arguments: the useful rewards of a college career; and the social arguments: the usefulness to society of a college career; and the cultural arguments: the preservation of our tradition and culture, we cannot lose sign of the fact that a higher education should stimulate and nourish the imagination. The rewards of the imagination are nothing less than the joy and value of acquiring new knowledge for its own sake and for the knowledge revolution into which the pursuit of the imagination thrusts us.

John Dewey was a pragmatist. problem solving, the result of the imagination, was more useful than general knowledge. And problem solving required the use of the imagination. Pragmatically speaking, education must offer some rewards in terms of prestige, power, income. Problem solving shows the way.

But what becomes of liberal education in this pragmatizing process? The argument circles. As always we must seek some middle ground. We find this middle ground simply by observing the lives of educated people. Referring once again to surveys³⁰ self-discovery may be far more important than prestige or power in terms

of life-long happiness. These surveys remind us that higher education serves first and foremost to broaden one's choice of careers and one's life options. We see this demonstrated by the northeastern farmer's children entering Khonkaen university and emerging into a new world.⁸¹ Their widening choice is not limited to vocation. Higher education tends to impart greater flexibility, tolerance, permissiveness and individual choice in matters of personal behavior other than career choice.

PRAGMATISM, IMAGINATION AND RESEARCH

Research is another aspect of this problem-solving utilitarian role of the university, as the imagination turns itself to the quest for a new knowledge. Research, a German contribution to the mainstream of higher education, becomes the passport into the future. The war between the past and the future is being waged on the university campus and its outcome rests squarely upon research.

Our university system in Thailand is young. we are frustrated by the demand for research as over against the demand to teach teeming hordes of up-wardly mobile students. Again, compromises must be made. Every teacher should be engaged in some kind of research. Every teacher cannot be. With a mass education system it is too much to expect every teacher to

* Land grant colleges grew up as a result of massive "land grants" given to universities by the federal government on condition that they be used for the practical welfare of the people. Cornell the first in 1862.

be a researcher. Research degrees are simply too heavy an investment for many teachers in Thailand. Even in U.S.A. the land of cheap PhD, 's, it requires an average of 5.8 years in the natural sciences and 9.13 years in the social sciences and humanities.³²

The proper balance between teaching and research is a problem our university and all universities face. The answer to it will not come through committee action of policy-from-on-high but pragmatically, with fair attention to the dual demand for teachers and researchers with proper respect accorded to each.

VALUES - FOR SOCIETY...

The imagination leads us to a value system and the choices inherent in one. The development of values must be cast into a broader-than-national context. Limited to the individual, values become personal piety. Limited to the nation, they become chauvinistic nationalism. And values, without some action resulting from them, are sterile. Left within the national context alone, the university inevitably degenerates into a mere instrument of the state. The students then become the objects of manipulation by political forces. Control passes from the university. The autonomy of the university is lost. And a university without autonomy is a contradiction in terms. The greatest single danger in a state-controlled higher education system is the loss of university autonomy as it becomes a tool in the hands of others.

Perhaps this is one reason why private colleges have been permitted.

Private colleges and universities in other countries have tended to serve as a counter-weight to state control. In Thailand, both the semi-autonomous Office of University Affairs and the Office of the National Education Commission should guard the university against being used as a tool... Ultimately, the university must see to its own autonomy and independence.

VALUES-AUTONOMY

In 1975 UNESCO laid down certain criteria for the measurement of university autonomy as follows: (1) the speed with which new ideas and new knowledge are transmitted; (2) the extent to which the university is able to tolerate differences, both within the university and between the university and other institutions; (3) whether the university has developed a realistic sense of identity, taking into account both its own self-interest and (4) going beyond that to the interests of social groupings and nations. UNESCO would ask, too, (5) whether the students were being prepared for life in a global context, facing problems of a global nature and, finally, (6) whether students are being prepared to respond creatively to adversity, reconciling conflicting interests, racial and religious differences, within their own lives and their university and community life. The report quoted John Dewey: "The problem is not whether the schools should participate in the production of a future society, but whether they should do it blindly or with the maximum possible of courageous in-

telligence and responsibility."⁸⁸

It is not unfair to ask why a university should have a special place in a society, why it should have any more autonomy than the Rotary Club or the Chamber of Commerce. In the west the answer to this question might be found in a six centuries old tradition of university autonomy and independence in which the **university** decided **who** might teach **what** to **whom** and **how** it should be taught. But here in Thailand we fall somewhat outside of that tradition and we must turn to more pragmatic answers than tradition.

Does a free university serve society better than a controlled one? A study of universities throughout the world suggests rather clearly that in those nations where universities have been controlled, a slow intellectual and cultural decay sets in. Suffice it to say, without citing names, that the list is by no means restricted to Communist lands.

No society can long survive if it cannot cope with the tasks of a new era. The university has developed over the years to cope with that task. To limit the university is to limit the nation's approach to the future. To constrain or restrain the university is to choke the flow of ideas from national life. To forbid students to learn where and what they will, to limit teachers from teaching how and what they will, is dangerous to the national life, far more dangerous than the risks of freedom. Thinking is always

risky but to limit thinking is far more dangerous. Nothing is more dangerous than uncriticized ideas. Party dicta, religious dogma, political fiat, have no place within the scheme of a free university.

When a campus becomes highly politicized, as so many have in various parts of the world, east and west, academic freedom, the principle condition for a meaningful university life, is threatened, more likely destroyed. Where professors must worry about the political reactions of students and colleagues, to say nothing of the police, there is no freedom to teach, study or do research. The university should be the center of innovation and change in a society. It is not just a training center. It is a point of challenge. And the university has always been an irritating lump in the body politic. May it ever be so.

CULTURAL VALUES...

To support UNESCO's broadening criteria of a university's autonomy is not to deny the strictly parochial tasks of a university, e.g. the teaching of Goethe and German literature in Germany, the teaching of Christian theology and history in the west, or the history of the Celts in Great Britain. Nor would these criteria inhibit the explosion of African studies in African universities or the priorities that should be placed upon southeast Asian and Thai studies in Thai universities.*

* Indeed, it is a national shame and scandal that our Thai students must go abroad properly to complete advanced degree in Thai studies. Education is part of a nation's development and our own concentration upon Thailand and southeast Asia should be a measure of our own pride and self-respect.

Just as it is the privilege of youth to believe that the world began with its own awareness of it, so it is the duty of the university to show the young that the world does not end with their awareness of it. We cannot be content to be parochial. We cease to be a university. It is another privilege of the young to believe that they are the first ones ever to have discarded the bonds and controls of the past, parental and cultural. Rebellion, revolution, even sex, all become the new invention of each succeeding generation. Another of the privileges of the university is to demonstrate to each succeeding generation that the world is much older and perhaps even a little wiser, than the young perceive, and that schemes for reform carry with them unforeseen side effects with the inevitable result that today's solutions become tomorrow's problems.

Parochialism, the "guild mentality", almost destroyed the medieval university. The pressure of outside forces upon the walls of the university to confine it to a particular political theory or exigency must be resisted at all costs. "Close the gates!" is a cry that must fall upon our deaf ears, whether it be to shut out the west, the whites, the blacks, the new, the old, whatever. "We must close our gates," is the cry of frightened little people who recoil from possible truths that may hurt. The university walls should be windows. Better yet, doors, through which pass an endless flow of ideas. Some of them may be good, some bad. Some relevant, some irrelevant. Some offensive, some inno-

cuous. But all must be heard.

The university's neighboring community provides some of those doors and windows. A function of the university is to serve as a cultural center for the community around and about. Ideally there should be a free flow of townsfolk in and out, coming to concerts, plays, lectures, enjoying the grounds, exhibits, displays.

To speak personally for a moment—during our quarter century in Thailand, years during which we have been welcomed, used, tolerated, and occasionally respected, it would be safe to say that the only times we have truly been offended were those times when our contributions or ideas were rejected simply because of our western origins. Why were we troubled by such rejection? We were embarrassed and uncomfortable in the presence of parochialism.

New knowledge sometimes threatens old values of which the university itself is the custodian. The university must protect both the new and the old. In Thailand we are left with a certain residue from rural traditional Thailand where "education dealt with important knowledge which was discovered only by heroes or saints, not by mortals. Such knowledge had to be obtained from one who had received it through the chain of teachers leading back to the original hero or saint. This kind of knowledge alone was education."⁸⁴ New knowledge is a threat to such a traditional definition of knowledge. Accommodation must be made.

Higher education plays a role as the

actual conservator, custodian and developer of the Thai cultural heritage, through its library systems, through its relationship with the Ministry of Fine Arts and the museums for which it provides personnel. More than this, within the university there are those scholars who continuously bring their intellectual resources to bear upon the interpretation and reinterpretation of our Thai heritage. Because universities came upon the Thai scene so recently, many of our greatest scholars have actually grown and lived outside its walls. This is decreasingly so as the old generation of truly great men yield their places to a younger generation who have found their place within the university system. It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of this small group—the survival of Thai culture depends upon it.

The process of cultural transmission is little understood. There is no way to assure the survival of past values, certainly the university cannot guarantee to do so. Meaning and values change constantly. There is no absolute "true Thai" culture nor even an aspect of that culture. Cut flowers wither, no matter how lovingly we tend them. But the music, the art, the memories evoked by those flowers may live on and on.

CONFLICTING SOCIAL FORCES...

The university cannot be insulated from social change. Despite all of the Newmans, classicists, romantics, social problems insistently beat upon the walls of the university. Lord Acton is supposed

to have said, "We must write on problems and not periods." Problems fill up and define an age. And as already noted, today's solution simply define tomorrow's problems. A fundamental task of the university must be to open people's minds to the problems of their day. This is done by "making information available, encouraging people to form critical and moral judgments and enabling them to participate in such changes as they believe appropriate to their own skills and interests. It involves their own development as individuals as well as that of the society as a whole."³⁵

Nor can the university separate itself from the culture and society within which it lives. The university as an instrument of service, a supplier of social needs, is well established in Thailand as well as in Europe and America.³⁶ But such service still has to do with the discovery and transmission of knowledge which remains an appropriate role for the university. The student is drawn ever more deeply into the experience of ideas, the realm of the imagination, and the intensity of commitment.

It is often said that "education is the most powerful instrument for effecting social change in the total culture and in its social institutions . . . The philosophy of education is not derived from philosophers or from philosophy. Education is a practical art . . . The philosophy of education is itself—like education—a function of the culture."³⁷ But *what* culture? Western writers often forget there is more than one. Our concepts of higher education are

drawn from so many cultures, east and west, that it is hard to see it as the product of any one. Our civilization has become so eclectic that this is reflected in our philosophy. What seems to be pragmatically true of any higher education is that it must serve its society and it is within the universities themselves where the designs for education that will maintain and preserve that society must be drawn up.

AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION...

In an earlier era, the design for preserving the society would have been drawn up in church, temple or monastery.⁸⁸ These venerable institutions tended to draw the allegiance of those of like religion, color, language, ethnic background. Today, on the other hand, the university takes pride in its universalism, which, to survive, must be protected from inside and from outside. Openness is the base upon which a doctrine of social transformation must be built.

Social transformation reveals itself historically in attacks upon the barriers between the ruler and the ruled, which is to say, an attack upon authority. Authority constitutes the barrier between the commanded and the commander. Thomas Paine called authority the "imposter". While we are all subject to authority and we have all accommodated ourselves to it, Paine challenges us all. His words reflect the revolutionary mood of the

18th century but by extension his words could apply to the barriers between the rich and poor, race and nation, male and female, class and class. These barriers are the barriers of authority and we should be able to look to the university for a critical analysis of them.

Authority can be queried only by reason. To challenge authority any other way is to resort to force which almost inevitably destroys the context and the possibility of any resolution. In the 18th century authority was successfully challenged by reason and there emerged the whole post-feudal world with which we are familiar. Authority must always be held up to public view by students and teachers whose critical faculties have been sharpened by confrontation with great ideas and great teachers.

As higher education continues its expansion from the elite in Thailand to a broader spectrum of the population* one can anticipate further challenges to the authority that separates class from class. The pressure of numbers seeking admission to our universities, the movement away from a society in which higher education was determined by birth, the utilitarian demands being made upon the university, all point to a wrestling with the problems of authority in our society.

The university can scarcely avoid such critical participation in social change. But that is not quite the same as saying that the university should be engaged in politics. Politics and social change are

* The statistics are impressive. See Research Report, op cit #3 above

not synonymous. In my introduction I promised not to discuss politics . . .

This is much clear, the university must never be partisan. Rather, it should function as a critic of any creed or party. The political polarization of campuses has to be wrong. It is wrong because it tends to culminate in violence, street fighting, destruction. It is a betrayal of the university which should be a place for dialogue. It almost always represents an attempt by one faction to gain control of the university. Within the university different ideas may be aired, even different ideologies. Ideas yes. Brickbats, no.

Political criteria have no place in the selection of personnel or in setting academic goals and standards. Most importantly, and this becomes a point of definition, scholars must have full and unfettered right to speak and think freely. They must be protected from class disruption, intimidation, and violence.³⁹ In return it is expected that these same scholars will not serve as agents of polarizing factions. Which is worse, a polarized campus or a domesticated one?

We see from the Thai experience that universities, having become directly involved in social/political change, were coerced into quiescence by political forces. Such acquiescence may be only *pro forma* for strictly strategic and temporary reasons. Politics or no politics, teachers must continue to provide students with an acquaintance with their particular branches of knowledge and in the training and the exercise of various intellectual skills, inculcating general capacities for thought

and contemplation. If teachers continue to attempt to cultivate intellectual and moral habits suitable for adult membership of a civilized society, and resist becoming instruments for the inculcation of particular dogmas and creeds, they will probably have done all that can be done in a politically charged atmosphere.

There is one point at which little compromise is acceptable. There is one dogma that must be preserved if the university is to hold up its head in the university world: it must preserve the integrity of its freedom. "The life of a free society is not a spontaneous phenomenon; it is the product of institutions and customs of great complexity and sophistication. Rousseau said that men are born free. This is nonsense; they become free only by adaptation and education. The habits of self-restraint and tolerance, which alone make possible a free society . . . come only as a result of a process of learning and discipline"⁴⁰ This kind of freedom can be preserved only by developing and retaining that critical objectivity upon which all useful social judgment must depend and by emphasizing the common elements in civilization.

Without this critical element a society gradually loses contact with the meaning of its past culture. Uncertain as to what is essential, it cannot decide what to keep or what to leave out. Confronted with a crisis in freedom, either within the university itself or within the society which couches it, the university can only waver, hem and haw. Prof. Embling, looking at the widely circulated Carnegie

Report from a European perspective⁴¹ speaks to the subject of freedom and criticism by commenting that "service to the community would rank higher than criticism of it." His comments fall far short of the mark, for how could there possibly be service to the community of any useful nature which had not been preceded by sound critical analysis? So, too, with freedom itself. To preserve the freedom, autonomy, independence, of the university requires an alive and alert critical faculty.

CONCLUSION ???

As higher education in Thailand evolves and moves into the future, what conclusion, if any, can be drawn?

First, the university, as a tool to be used from the outside, whether by nation, ruling élite, political party, ideology, or anything else, has to be rejected. The university is owned by no one. It is autonomous. It is the university! Its critical faculties, its objectivity, are its very life and soul; they are its *raison d'être* within the Thai society.

In the second place, of the two great historical streams that flow into the Thai university, neither can hold exclusive sway, both must be accommodated.

Let us never surrender Newman's romantic ideal of "general education" which views the university as high and lifted up, where an assembled community of scholars seeks to learn and to transfer their learning to each succeeding generation. The liberal arts as a conservator of our heritage is clearly established. It is

equally clear that the liberal arts opens before us the world of knowledge which will help us to face the future with reason and with imagination. Even the vocational requirements of the future will draw increasingly from the humanities, as we need more and more **educated** and not merely **trained** people to deal with the complicated decision patterns that lie ahead.

The humanities is a discipline that will help us to deal with our changing culture, developing arts, mass consumerism. That is only the threshold. At the center lies the need within the Thai society for minds that have learned how to learn.

On the other hand the utilitarian stream is here to stay. And it is quite essential. Even the medieval university filled the professional expectations of its day as did Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Culalongkorn from their beginnings. The German university, the product of the Enlightenment, found its legitimacy in research and transferred that contribution to the rest of the world. The American Land-grant colleges found their legitimacy in putting national resources at the service of the people and that has profoundly effected higher education throughout the world and most especially in Thailand.

Finally, Thai universities like their sisters abroad have settled into an easy accommodation with utilitarianism. But it is a utilitarianism that must make room for the humanities, cherish and protect them, lest it be reduced simply to vocationalism without education. Within this

"middle way" the university must be perpetually examining and re-examining itself. Does it convey a fair and objective sense of the cultural patterns of Thailand? Does it cover all of the basic materials of cultural expression, proportionately and fairly, in terms of Thai art, music, literature, religion, philosophy? Does it cast the Thai culture into world perspective? For only as it does so can it transcend parochialism. Having done these things, does it convey a sense of cultural responsibility, that is, a program of cul-

tural advancement in its community both inside and outside of the university?

Only as the university applies its critical faculties to its own meaning and purpose does it earn the right to turn this same critical objectivity upon its cultural milieu.

Long may our university live. Long may it be a true university, a place of learning, a place of critical judgment, free and autonomous, serving its community both within and without, as it grows in wisdom and in stature.

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