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The American Universities and the Future of Western Civilization

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"What is our life but an endless flight of winged facts or events? In splendid variety these changes come, all putting questions to the human spirit. Those men who cannot answer by a superior wisdom these facts or questions of time, serve them. Facts encumber them, tyrannize over them, and make the men of routine the men of *sense*, in whom a literal obedience to facts has extinguished every spark of that light by which man is truly man. But if the man is true to his better instincts or sentiments, and refuses the dominion of facts, as one that comes of a higher race, remains fast by the soul and sees the principle, then the facts fall aptly and supple into their places; they know their master, and the meanest of them glorifies him."—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays*, 1st Series, "History"

WE WHO are a part of the civilization that has developed in Europe since the eleventh century and in America since the sixteenth, are living in a world many times richer in material comforts than any before in history. We are living in a world where people are more confused about the nature of the moral and the intellectual virtues than they have been since the Dark Ages, possibly since the last century of the Roman Empire. Few are capable of recognizing those who practice these virtues. It is fashionable to deny that there can be any firm criteria for judging between good and bad private conduct, between good and bad philosophy or art, teaching or statesmanship.

Twenty-five years ago the late Geoffrey Scott described the condition of architecture in words that might have been written today about almost every art or profession or intellectual discipline. "We subsist," he wrote, "on a number of architectural habits, on scraps of tradition,

on caprices and prejudices, and above all on this mass of more or less specious axioms, of half-truths, unrelated, uncriticized and often contradictory, by means of which there is no building so bad that it cannot with a little ingenuity be justified, or so good that it cannot plausibly be condemned."[1] The only difference between conditions on the eve of the great war and now is that traditions are scrappier than they were then, that propaganda plays a larger rôle in discussion than it used to, that caprice and prejudice are less restrained, and that it has become so common to justify the bad and belittle the good, that the words good and bad, honor and dishonor, truth and falsehood have lost most of their meaning for persons who influence opinion.

For this state of uncertainty and gullibility, our education is partly to blame. The tendency among teachers and scholars for several decades has been to assume that if men follow their inclinations and selfish interests in whatever directions they lead, the ends of teaching and research will take care of themselves. The belief, common not only in the Middle Ages but during most of the nineteenth century, in the existence of general principles applicable to learning and to conduct has been weakened and almost destroyed. Discredit has also been thrown on the view commonly held by the learned in our grandparents' time that there are a limited number of great and permanent books, and that no man can call himself educated without a knowledge of some of them.

A student of today who reads through the paragraphs describing the meaning of words and ideas in *The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia,* the work of American scholars of the 'eighties and 'nineties, might be surprised to find how often Plato, Aristotle, Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas are cited. An examination of that dictionary shows that our scholarly standards have changed very strikingly in the last half century. Today it is hardly possible for anyone to suggest that these authorities have something important to teach all of us, without being called a medievalist, out of touch with modern conditions. If persons not members of the philosophy department cite these

1 *The Architecture of Humanism,* London, 1914, p. viii.

philosophers as authorities, they are frequently charged with a desire to re-establish every feature of the medieval schools and universities, together with most features of medieval theology and political life. They are even suspected of a desire to restore medieval economic conditions.

Such principles as are still taught today in the colleges and universities are concerned not with learning in general, but with some particular branch of it such as qualitative analysis, money and banking, bibliography, map making, or historical criticism. As the number of subjects taught in the schools has multiplied more rapidly during the last fifty years than during the whole of previous Western history, such principles are the possessions of small groups of specialists, who have woven them into esoteric codes. They seldom make these codes more accessible to the general public, or even to their colleagues in other departments, than the ritual of a Greek-letter fraternity or a masonic lodge. The codes are modified so frequently that they become obsolete in a few decades, if not in a few years. A graduate student who started work for his Doctor's degree in some department of a university just after the great war, and who now returns to complete it, finds practically all the knowledge he has retained useless for meeting the requirements of the new instructors that have replaced his old teachers. A student is likely to meet with a similar difficulty if he transfers from one graduate school to another.

Dissatisfaction with the results of recent developments in American education has been fairly widespread for some time. This has given rise to much debate, some of which has found its way into print. There have been a few constructive proposals for reform. In view of the history of American education during the last half century, those brought forward by the President of the University of Chicago deserve even more attention than they have received.[2] Mr. Hutchins suggests, among other things, that since American education is suffering today from a lack of general principles, it is the duty of professors and teachers to rediscover such principles and to teach them. The higher

2 R. M. Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America*, New Haven, 1936; *No Friendly Voice*, Chicago, 1936.

learning, he points out, should be concerned with the solution of intellectual problems of general importance. Unless facts are collected for some valuable purpose, the search for them will not contribute to wisdom, or to knowledge, or even to accurate statements of fact. The chief task of education today, he suggests, is to teach men to recognize what is important, to teach them to discriminate between the good, the mediocre and the bad, and to equip them with the means for doing something to improve themselves and to help their fellows.

One of the greatest faults of education in America in the last fifty years or so has been that educators have followed rather than directed the currents of the time. They have left on the student the impression that he is doing all that is necessary if he is guided by those of his instincts and desires which do not conflict with the ideas and the practices of the people with whom he associates. He is not directed by his teachers to standards of scholarly or of ethical conduct better than those to which the common run of men and women are always subject unless they have superior guidance, because the flesh is always weak and it is always easier at the moment to evade and to compromise than to face issues and surmount difficulties. At the same time, there has been an increasing disposition on the part of the teachers to belittle the great works both past and present, by debunking their authors and denying that there are such things as superior knowledge and wisdom among human beings. Instead of learning to judge small men with the help of the wisdom of great men, the student learns to belittle great men armed with all the weaknesses and the jealousies of small men. The student learns to conform where he ought to question and to question where he ought to conform. He does not learn self-criticism or independent judgment. The difference between mediocrity and distinction for a considerable number of persons lies precisely in their willingness to attempt to outdo themselves. It is to Marivaux, a man sometimes charged with being frivolous, that we owe what is perhaps the best statement of this truth. Like Beaumarchais, Marivaux belonged to that movement in French eighteen-century literature which has been often misundersood because it had a lightness of touch. There is nothing frivolous about his remark in the *Vie de Marianne*, "One must

be better than one is in order to be great; to be small one has only to remain what one is."

Yet from the cradle to the advanced age which it is now thought men and women must attain before they can venture out into life, Americans have been encouraged to do what they please, to remain what they are. The reported reaction of a small boy at a progressive school to this kind of misnamed teaching is perhaps symptomatic. One day in despair he turned to his teacher and said, "Must I do what I want to?" It is a severe indictment of American schooling. The students are justified in concluding that there is not much value in education, if men who are called educated have nothing better to offer them by way of advice than to tell them to do what they please.

The training in colleges and universities is less obviously aimless. But even the few graduates who carry off scholastic honors in their eagerness to get the better teaching posts, leave the universities with a warped conception of knowledge. They mistake the study of economics or chemistry or sociology, or more frequently some branch of these disciplines, for the pursuit of knowledge, and give their specialty an autonomy for which there is no justification. The best-trained graduates seldom learn more than some narrow specialty. They are usually ignorant of the general cultural and intellectual tradition that the Western world has developed from its Greek and Latin heritage. The very great majority of all graduates are without knowledge of any discipline. They find in their colleges and universities no objectives except those which are of immediate material and social interest. Their parents frequently send them to college because they are told that college graduates earn more money and exert more social influence than their less fortunate fellows.

We are living at a critical time in Western history. The alternatives to materialistic values have been forgotten at the very period when it is becoming apparent that the phenomenal material progress to which our ancestors have for centuries been accustomed can no longer go on at the same pace as in the past. If we trace back the industrial history of Western civilization through five centuries, we find that toward the middle of the fifteenth century there began on the continent of Europe

a remarkable speeding up in industrial output. The hundred years from about 1440 to about 1540 were followed by another hundred years ending about 1640 during which the rate of growth in industrial output in Great Britain was more rapid than it had been ever before in any European country. During every hundred years since 1440, with the possible exception of the hundred years from 1640 to 1740, the rate of growth in industrial output has been more rapid than during the preceding hundred years. We have now reached a turning point. The rate of increase in industrial output in Western Europe and the United States from 1940 to 2040 will almost certainly be much less rapid than it his been from 1840 to the present. During the five centuries which began with the Renaissance, Western men, and especially Americans, have become possessed by an expansionist frame of mind. So absorbing is the quest for material improvement that men have ceased to accept the lesson of the Founder of Christianity when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world." That is the source of much of their unhappiness. It is the source of much of the weakness manifested by the democratic states in the face of despotism.

Can we recover the Christian belief which was once of such comfort? Individuals undoubtedly can. I have known one or two who did. But we can hardly hope that in the immediate future Christianity in the old form will regain with the people generally the strength which it possessed in Europe in the time of Thomas Aquinas, or even the strength which it possessed in America in the early nineteenth century. Religion, like education and like most of life, has come to be too subdivided. There are too many churches. The churches are too much occupied with other matters than the saving of souls. They devote themselves too much to campaigns (good in themselves) for reducing automobile accidents, or to social activities likely to help young women to find husbands.

I do not suggest that ministers should abandon the attempt to bring back the old Christian faith. I think that is precisely what they ought to concern themselves about. I do not suggest that it is impossible to combine the Christian faith with the preaching of social justice, provided the appeal of the churches in connection with social justice

is primarily to the spirit rather than to the flesh. But the universities and the schools are also in a position to supply the comfort and the faith that is so much needed, and in the United States they have greater opportunities than the churches for doing so. The universities and the schools can prepare the way for a return to a common religious belief. Without their help the churches are likely to remain impotent, even if, as is to be hoped, they again concern themselves mainly with saving souls, and with the principles of right conduct. As almost everyone in the United States now goes to school, the elementary schools, and even the universities, through the influence which they might exert on the elementary schools, are in a position to influence almost everyone. The schools and colleges and the universities might take the place of the medieval monasteries and other ecclesiastical foundations. There, learning was kept alive because it was always associated with the teaching of virtue. Here, we may hope, virtue will be kept alive because it is always associated with genuine learning.

With what should the universities concern themselves if they are to lead America and the world out of the intellectual chaos and the moral confusion which have undermined the confidence of men? I suggest two principles which might be applied to the teaching and the study of all subjects. In the first place the universities might concentrate on the relations between the various branches of scholarship. While no professor can hope to know as much about the technique of banking as a good banker, he can know more than the banker about the relations between banking and religion or between banking and politics. The study of these relationships should become the special province of the university professor. He alone is in a position to examine these relationships disinterestedly because he is not a banker or a statesman or a politician. He ought to be a philosopher who dedicates his life to the search for truth. So the student should not be asked, as he now is asked, to study special subjects without relation to the rest of knowledge. He should devote an important part of his time to questions like these. What influences have the soil and the natural resources upon the forms of commercial and industrial enterprise? How does government influence religion and how does religion influence government? What influence has philosophy upon poetry and poetry

upon philosophy? In order to answer such questions, professors as well as students will have to become acquainted with other subjects besides the ones they now teach. They will not be able to take refuge in the esoteric jargon of their special fields, for they will have to speak in a simple common language intelligible to every intelligent person. Inquiries into these main questions will raise a great number of subquestions, which should be answered always in relation to the main question. These inquiries will help to show that all aspects of knowledge and of life are interrelated, that a common philosophy, as well as a common language, is necessary to the discovery of these interrelations, and that nearly all the divisions that now exist in the higher learning are artificial. They interfere with understanding and with the creative life. By helping to redirect learned men towards the search for truth, these inquiries should do something to restore unity to knowledge. They should show that the task of the intellect is always essentially the same task. They should indicate how fundamental it is to train young children in grammar and composition, mathematics and logic, and in methodical habits of hard work, in order to prepare them to deal with the difficult and important problems of the higher learning.

To discuss the relations between the various branches of knowledge will provide a way of discovering the relative importance of each branch. This leads me to the second principle, that might guide university instruction, which is to teach the student at every stage of his work that a hierarchy of values exists in relation to knowledge and wisdom, a hierarchy of values that has withstood the test of time, in the sense that very wise men have been able to agree upon them during some twenty-five or thirty centuries. The greatest thinkers and the greatest poets are those who have known how to put everything with which they deal in its place, who have known how to arrange their subjects in the order of importance, acting on the belief that virtue, together with its handmaids beauty and truth, are man's noblest objectives. If the universities concern themselves more with the thought of the great philosophers and writers of the past, and less with the current values of the immediate world about them, they will help to reduce materialism to its proper place as a good only in so far as it contributes to the spiritual welfare of mankind.

The next purpose of teaching true values would be to enable each student to learn what aspects of his special studies deserve the most attention. The scholar and the advanced student who are devoting themselves mainly to physics or to political science should be taught what are the most important questions in connection with these subjects, and all questions with which the discipline deals should be arranged according to their relative importance for the good life of society and of the individuals who make it up. The students should learn at first hand who have been the great physicists and the great political scientists, and why. The students of poetry, music, or history should be introduced to the great poets, the great musicians, and the great historians. The students should be helped to learn that the reading of a great historian like Thucydides may tell them more about the probable course of international relations than the perusal of articles in current newspapers and magazines. Reading or hearing the works of the great and the less great will help them to form an opinion of the elements that go to make up greatness, and of the nature of the vital tradition in connection with art.

At the same time students might be taught that not all subjects within the university curriculum are equally important for the good life. They should be helped to learn that the study of the basic principles of political science, as formulated by such men as Aristotle, Aquinas, Bodin, Hobbes, and Montesquieu, is more important than the study of public utility administration, of ward political machinery or of labor injunctions. They should be helped to appreciate that the study of philosophy, in the ancient sense of the basic principles of knowledge and wisdom, is even more important than the study of political science. They should be encouraged to ask themselves whether the study of economic laws, that have hardly engaged the attention of thinkers for more than two or three centuries, is likely to be as fundamental a matter for human welfare, as the study of the ends of the state which have engaged the attention of some of the greatest thinkers at least since the time of Plato.

How might the present treatment of subjects in the universities be altered to help in establishing the unity of all knowledge and in showing the proper relationship of one branch to others? While I am

an economic historian, not an economist, my university association has been largely with departments of economics, so I shall venture to suggest the change in the nature of economic instruction that seems to me desirable if we are to break down the autonomy now claimed by economics. As I see it, there are essentially two ways in which the autonomy of economics is conceived, and neither helps much in preserving Western culture. One is the conception of economics as a science, like mathematics, divorced from life and pursued for the sake of the elegant demonstrations that are possible. The other is the conception of economics as a body of doctrines which, if only applied by businessmen, statesmen, farmers, and wage earners, would solve all the important problems of existence. The holders of this second conception would be inclined to substitute economics for philosophy in a manner similar to that in which Monsieur Gilson has shown us Descartes tried to substitute mathematics for philosophy, and in which Kant tried to substitute physics for philosophy, and in which Comte tried to substitute sociology for philosophy.

If the economist adopts the first conception, he washes his hands of the difficult and dangerous world of which he is a part. If he adopts the second, he proposes to solve the problems of the world by increasing the production and improving the distribution of material commodities. But this preoccupation with material values is one of the chief sources of weakness in American education today. It is also one of the principal causes for the weakness of constitutional government in the face of despotism. If economics is to help in preserving Western culture, it should not set itself up as a substitute for philosophy and ethics. It should try to find its place in relation to philosophy and ethics. The economist who mistakes economics for philosophy is not, as Richard Hooker might have said if the species had existed in Elizabethan England, a man of judgment, for "no man of judgment esteems it better to be rich than wise, virtuous and religious." If, therefore, the economist is to contribute to the good life, if he is to help in defending democracy, he should be concerned with the production and distribution of wealth as they contribute to wisdom, virtue and religion.

Any attempt to re-establish a hierarchy of values with the help of

the past as well as the present, may be a cause of distress to those professors who deal with the less important subjects. But, as I shall attempt to show, this need not be the case if professors and other people recover a pride in good workmanship. A sense of good workmanship would create a more durable bond between scholars and teachers than can be secured when every member of a university claims an autonomy and often a superiority for the subject he professes. The satisfaction that can be secured by professing one of the less important subjects well, and by explaining its place in relation to the ends of all study, would offset the advantages of the kind of assertiveness that is bred when everyone is driven to claim that his subject is better than any other, when everyone is obsessed with the desire to be "tops." If the universities would recognize a hierarchy of values, we should hear less of that dreadful abstraction, the inferiority complex. It is not when people know that their task is less important than another task that they feel inferior. It is when there is no agreement among men who are supposed to be wise concerning what is important, that men become assertive and dissatisfied.

Strange though it may seem, nowadays the higher learning is hardly concerned at all with the attempt to distinguish the important from the less important. I can illustrate this by two experiences I have had during the past year, as a teacher in the graduate school. I give a course in English history from 1540 to 1740 which consists mainly of lectures. The only statement I made in this course which I know caused some resentment among my listeners (there were probably many others but this is the only one I heard of) was that Shakespeare is the greatest of all English writers, that this seemed to me to be so well established that it could not be lightly challenged.

The other experience was in the examination of a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The candidate was to be examined in the field of English history from 1600 to 1700. I asked him to name the four Englishmen whom he regarded as the most important figures in the cultural and intellectual history of the seventeenth century, to put them in the order of their importance, and to justify the selection and the arrangement he made. These were the men he chose and the

order in which he chose them: Locke, Lilburne, Winstanley, and James I. The inclusion of Locke can be justified, but there was no mention of Shakespeare, who lived until 1616, or Milton, or Harvey, who discovered the circulation of the blood, or Newton, whom Addison regarded as one of the three greatest men who ever lived. And no serious person would deny that, if we are concerned with political philosophers, as the candidate professed to be, Hobbes and Harrington are the only names which could properly be coupled with Locke. The candidate was not able to justify his selection. He had not read the works of any of the men he named. It emerged later that he had selected them simply because he had heard of them in a course which he had recently attended.

Now the higher learning should train students so that such a lack of taste would be impossible. What are some of the means of attaining this end? What specific kind of study is needed if universities are to concentrate on the principles to which I have referred? For one thing much of the students' time in the graduate school, the junior college, and even the high school should be taken up with reading the great books of classical and Western history. Some great books of Chinese and Arabian history might be included, but the main matter should be the great books of Western history, which are necessarily closer to us as Westerners. The student of American history should acquire a first-hand knowledge of the best books by American writers. We are the worst educated nation of the West when it comes to a knowledge of our own literature. Our literature may not be as great as English, or French, or Italian, or German literature, but it contains many respectable works and some great ones. How can the rest of the world be aware of this when Americans know so little about their own writers that I recently heard the wife of a novelist ask, when *Moby Dick* was mentioned, whether it was one of the best sellers of the year?

Students should be discouraged from reading books about great authors which attempt to expound their views at second hand, and from reading textbooks which are written by instructors to supersede previous textbooks and to relieve their authors from the necessity of getting along on their meager salaries. It is difficult enough for most

students to understand a great book when they read it. We all know men who can reel off a list of great books they have read, though their lives suggest that they got through them after the fashion of the proverbial American who boasted that he had "covered" the Louvre in ten minutes, and that he could have done it in five if he had worn running shoes.

Another reason for avoiding textbooks is that they confuse the students about authorities. I have been told that a candidate for a Doctor's degree at Columbia University attributed the Malthusian law to Professor Seligman! Writings do not even survive in the original form until their writers are dead. In one of our large universities, the psychological views of Watson, the behaviorist, have long been presented to the student not in his own words, but in a textbook.

If great writers and thinkers are to maintain the place in education to which their genius entitles them, students must be discouraged from reading commentaries upon them which contribute nothing, but simply summarize, often very badly, what the great men have said so much better. Unless students are sent to the sources, to the vineyards themselves, to drink the great wines of past ages, learning will sink to the position it occupied during the last centuries of classical civilization, when, if men read at all, they read commentaries on commentaries which were themselves commentaries on the works of great writers.

This leads me to another important means which the universities have at their disposal, of establishing the two principles of which I have spoken. I refer to the weighing of evidence. This is closely related to the reading of great books, since one of the main objects in weighing evidence is to learn how far to trust authorities. Students should be taught that a great work, like Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations,* the fruit of a life-time of careful labor and scholarship, is of much more value than some recent textbook which purports to bring the subject of economics up to date. Students should be taught always to inquire into the source of any information or theory. Is it an authority who was honest and objective? Is the information that he gives the information that is most relevant in answering the question that he is attempting to answer? Had he the means of obtaining reliable informa-

tion? Was he equipped to make the best possible use of this information and did he take pains to do so? All these are questions that the student should be taught to answer for himself, under the guidance of teachers who recognize their importance and insist on a conscientious and honest attempt to grapple with such problems. Above all the student should be taught that he is not in a position to express an opinion about a book he has not read.

If the student learns principles for weighing evidence, his experiences will give him a better knowledge of the world than he acquires today when he goes about to dances and parties and football games, reads picture papers and listens to the radio without any principles for judging what he sees and hears. The study of evidence will help the student to retain and to enrich his common sense, and the lack of common sense among grown-up Americans today, the lack of wariness, is another cause for the intellectual and moral crisis of our times. Americans are prone to believe whatever they are told, though experience should teach them that most of the information circulated in the modern world is unreliable. When they are constantly allowing themselves to be fooled by the wrong persons they are not in a position to be convinced by the right persons. It is partly because persons feel free to talk about subjects they have not studied or books they have not read, that the public is so confused today about learning that it cannot distinguish the authentic from the false. So we find some members of university faculties saying they are free to talk about a subject only when they know nothing about it. So we hear people always saying they want to hear the other side of a question when they are unwilling to take the trouble to learn about either side.

The universities should demand that the student play a much more active part in his own schooling, by writing and speaking on the subjects that he is studying, and in relation to the principles to which I have referred. Less time should be spent at lectures and conferences—many of which partake of the worst elements of textbooks—and more at hard work. The number of lectures a student is expected to attend as an undergraduate and especially as a graduate should be greatly reduced. Lectures should be much more formal and finished than at

present. Their repetition beyond a limited number of times should be discouraged. They should be made to command the attention of the students by the importance of the subject matter. William James had some trenchant things to say about the flabby nature of the mind which spends a portion of its time every day at entertainments. Many college and university students think it is the main function of their teachers in lecturing to entertain them and to provide information which, if partly memorized, will enable them to pass examinations. They have apparently never heard of the old adage of John Dewey's about the value of learning by doing.

The proportion of graduate students in American universities today who can write even tolerable English is deplorably small. The only way to learn to write is to write. In addition to studying English composition, the student should be required to write simply, clearly and effectively about every subject that he studies. The principles of composition should be always in his mind, rather than remaining a separate subject in the curriculum that he is free to forget when he leaves the English department. If it is true that a man can only write straight when he can think straight, it is also true that writing straight helps a man to think straight, that his thought grows as he writes. Writing is not an easy task or one in which short cuts are possible. The student should spend a large portion of his time writing and rewriting, and re-examining what he has written in the light of his sources and authorities. This kind of work cannot be done in a hurry, late at night after an exhausting day. It requires a great deal of study and patience; it demands the best strength a man can give. By writing and speaking, if possible to a critical audience, the student will be helped to learn that the great lessons of education are the product not of passive listening and hasty summarizing, but of active exertion.

In order to make such exertion possible, the nature of the instruction in most graduate schools would have to be altered. The graduate schools now try to perform two different kinds of functions. They train teachers for work in universities, colleges, junior colleges, and high schools. They train creative scholars. No effort is usually made to distinguish between these two functions. Neither is performed as effectively as it might be.

If they are to be better performed, the proper course would seem to be to distinguish between them. That could be done, as has often been suggested, by awarding two different degrees. Persons competent to teach might be awarded the Ph.D. as at present. A new and higher degree might be awarded for creative scholarship. If this were done, either the Master's or the Bachelor's degree might be abolished, for there would be no use in increasing the number of degrees, when there are already so many.

What should be the nature of the training for these two degrees? To begin with, all course requirements and all course examinations should be abolished. The training of graduate students working for either of the degrees should not consist, as it often does at present, in having them commit to memory a large number of facts or theories relating to fields and courses within the department, and based on the special interests of the particular professors in charge of the various fields. The training should be such as to enable the student to master the facts and theories relating to any field, if and when the need arises. Teachers might be expected to play a more active part than they generally do at present as advisers, counselors and older colleagues for the better graduate students who seek such advice and counsel on questions of method and scholarly discipline.

A candidate for the Ph.D., the degree to be granted to persons capable of teaching, should be expected to understand ideas and to acquire a sufficient knowledge of research to present material on important subjects in an intelligent and attractive way, as he will have to do if he is to teach effectively without textbooks. He should demonstrate his knowledge of the great works of scholarship relating to the discipline in which he specializes, as well as his knowledge of some great works outside his department which are worthy of the attention of all educated persons. He should be expected to study the relations between his special subject of concentration and the general body of knowledge, especially the history of the particular subjects treated in his department and their relation to philosophy and ethics. His competence as a teacher should be tested by a small number of general examinations. He should be required also to submit a considerable amount of well-

composed written work, and to give frequent oral discourses in seminars attended by his fellow students and his teachers. His written work and his oral discourses, as well as his record in the examinations, should be taken into account in deciding whether he is entitled to the Ph.D., and on what terms. In order to give the most promising candidates the recognition which might stimulate them to out-do themselves, the old practice of granting the degree, the degree with honors, with high honors, or with highest honors should be revived.

A candidate for the new and higher degree would be expected, in addition, to submit a thesis. It would not be enough, as it is at present, for him to make an "addition to knowledge." He should be required to make an addition to knowledge that has some importance in terms of the higher values of ethics and philosophy. He should be required to present his new and valuable knowledge in such a form that it might be read with profit by any well-educated man. As the new degree would give the holder a rank in the academic world higher than the "Ph.D. with highest honors," it should be reserved for the very rare students who show some promise of becoming creative scholars and thinkers. A candidate for the higher degree whose written work fell short of the standard set for it, would still be in line, of course, for the Ph.D.

Such a program as I have outlined does not involve the elimination of the principal subjects now taught in American universities. It does mean that all these subjects would be subordinated to the fundamental aims of education, which I have attempted to state, and that all the subjects would be taught according to a common plan, so that it would become apparent that neither wisdom nor knowledge is to be acquired by dividing the higher learning into a number of separate and supposedly unrelated topics. For many generations the trend in science and education has been towards the foundation of new, independent disciplines. The great need in American education today is not for novelty. It is for agreement and unity. In the future we should aim to reduce the number of disciplines, by encouraging coalitions between departments, and between "fields" within departments, by insisting that all departments should speak in a language that the others can under-

stand, and by acknowledging that all departments have a common objective in the pursuit of truth. If university professors try to see their subjects in relation to other subjects and to the moral and intellectual virtues, they will stop evading the question, what ought to be? by taking shelter in descriptions of what is. If a description is to have any value, it must be about a subject that is worth describing.

The kind of education here outlined might help to school the young in habits of honesty, so that they would be concerned at the university not primarily with personal advancement but with the search for truth. It might train them to get satisfaction from understanding as well as from wealth and from vanity. It might train them in habits of accuracy, fundamental at a time when the world is suffering from a total disregard of accurate statements of fact. It might train them in habits of steady application to interesting work at the stage of life when these habits can be most easily acquired.

It is frequently said that the task of the schools and universities should be to prepare men and women to meet life. We can all agree on this as an objective. But we make a fundamental mistake when we assume that this objective can be obtained by making the schools, colleges and universities a sort of replica of the practical world of business, industry and medicine, law and political campaigning, movies, radios, and dishwashing machines. When the schools and universities are put to such uses the students do not learn to meet life, they learn only to drown in life. The kind of training that Mr. Hutchins is advocating and that I am supporting in this article is what is needed if men are to resist the domination of facts and events, of which Emerson spoke, and which extinguishes "every spark of that light by which man is truly man." No man in modern America is suffering from lack of contact with the world about him. Men are suffering from too many of the wrong kind of contacts, from the lack of any principles that would help them to give meaning to their experiences, and that would help them to form enriching friendships. They are suffering from a lack of moral fortitude, which many of our pioneering ancestors had to have, and which is indispensable if we are to face the disappointments and the unhappiness that life always brings. They are less likely

to find such fortitude in the world about them than in the great books of the past. The student does not learn to meet life by being tossed from experience to experience, and from subject to subject, without the opportunity to digest his experiences and to reflect upon the subjects to which he is introduced. If any men are to keep their heads above water in the sea of noise, excitement, competitive scramble and sensational rush that the modern world has become, the schools and universities will have to teach them how to follow the good life.

If education can train men in the habits of honesty, accuracy, and hard work, if it can teach them that there is a moral and an intellectual hierarchy, if it can help them to acquire good taste and discrimination concerning the arts, it will contribute greatly to the good life. It will serve the majority of our citizens who are concerned neither with education nor with the creative life, by teaching them the joy of doing things well. There is no occupation or activity, whether it be surgery or banking, waiting on table, or living life with one's wife and children, where there are not good ways of acting and bad ways of acting. If young people have learned to discriminate between good ways and bad ways in education, they will know that the joy of doing things well is accessible to everyone. They will not be so much concerned as at present about changing their occupations or their wives, for they will have learned the principle that everyone has open to him the fine opportunity of doing well the thing he has to do. If that opportunity is once appreciated, every task, even the humblest, acquires a dignity that no task can have if it is done badly. In Paris, I once picked up a taxi with an old chauffeur, who drove me to the Bibliothèque Nationale. Like many persons who drive their own cars, I sometimes feel ill at ease when I confide myself to another driver. But before we had gone a block, I was completely comfortable because I felt the master touch, and knew that although we were driving fast, nothing would happen to us. When I left my chauffeur, I complimented him on his driving. He admitted he was good, and he added: "In the old days I used often to drive Anatole France. One day Monsieur France said to me, 'in all the crafts there are genuises and you are one in yours.'"

It is a part of the task of our universities to give the student an

understanding of what is good work, and a pride in doing it. If taxi drivers and cooks and small peasant farmers in France can lead happy lives because of the excellence of their workmanship, although none of them suppose that what they are doing has as much significance for human welfare as the labor of a philosopher or a poet, why should it not be possible for professors of minor subjects in America to take an equal pride in their work? If they do, we shall have more reverence for poets and philosophers and we shall probably have better poets and philosophers.

The task of education is the task not only of university faculties but of all persons who train the young. If the parent and the elementary schoolteacher fail to do their duty, there is little hope that the university professor can do his, because the number of persons who can be redeemed after the age at which they enter the universities is exceedingly small. But the universities must define the nature of the duty. They must show the advantages of leadership by taking the lead. If they define the nature of the duty correctly, it will be possible to improve the standards of education all along the line.

At a time when the civilization of Europe seems to be crumbling before our eyes, Americans are confronted with an intellectual and a moral task for which they have had less training than their European ancestors. It is frequently said that the future of Western civilization depends on America. We may go farther and say that it depends on the American universities. The urgency of the case and the weaknesses of American education make it indispensable that university professors should face their task immediately, and should bury their petty jealousies, their private ambitions, and their quarrels in a consciousness of their great mission. If the universities are to succeed, it means that no obstacles should be regarded as unsurmountable, that the professors should renounce a desire for quick results, that the virtues of patience and courage and self-discipline should be restored to the position from which they were dethroned by the American passion for getting ahead. Even if the difficulties seem insuperable, the task cannot be evaded. We would do well to remember the motto of William the Silent: *"Point n'est besoin d'espérer pour entreprendre ni de réussir pour persévérer."*