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**HUMANITIES AT THE CORE:
CURRICULAR ISSUES IN THE 1980S**

Remarks by:

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Thirty-five years ago, the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, identified the goal of education as culture.

- Culture according to Jaspers is "a given historical ideal (and) . . . a coherent system of associations, gestures, values, ways of putting things. . ."
- The educated person, Jaspers concluded, was one to whom culture--so defined--has become second nature.

Today, a generation after Jaspers wrote, we find ourselves, as a nation, deeply hesitant about the aims of education.

- What, precisely, would characterize a person of culture in our fragmented post-modern society?
- The absence of answers is haunting.

There was a time when colleges and universities were absolutely confident about the goals of education.

- The task was to transmit--to the next generation--moral, cultural, and political values and traditions--with no questions asked.
- This mission was once so vital that in most 19th Century colleges the presidents taught a "moral philosophy" course as the jewel in the academic crown.

Even after the direct power of the church society declined, schools and colleges continued confidently as a bastion of the moral order. It was a sterile time--diversity was ignored.

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Today all this has changed. Early in this century, confidence in the unity of the established order began to fade.

- Uniqueness was affirmed.
- Past certainties were shaken by scientific inquiry and higher education's confidence in its own moral mission dramatically declined.
- Commenting on this loss of coherence and conviction, Robert Hutchins, on one occasion, described the modern university as a series of separate departments held together by a central heating system;
- and Clark Kerr characterized the multiversity as an assemblage of faculty entrepreneurs held together by a common grievance over parking.

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We are still absolutely confident of the length of education.

But we are uncertain as to the ends.

This confusion as to substance was driven home when a Stanford University faculty committee proposed in 1972 that a western civilization course be required of all students. The student newspaper, in a biting attack on the faculty proposal, said in a front-page editorial that the new requirement would:

remove from students the right to choose for themselves . . . This is not to deny that courses in western culture are valuable and to require such a course, however, carries a strong, illiberal connotation. . . It imposes a uniform standard on nonuniform people.

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When I first read that statement in my office in New York 10 years ago, I was startled and disturbed. I was startled that the student editor failed to understand that while we are indeed "nonuniform," we are at the same time interdependent. He had failed to learn that with all of our differences we have a shared cultural, a shared agenda of urgent contemporary problems, and a shared future that cannot be ignored. It seemed remarkable that one of our most gifted students had failed to learn that uniformity and interrelatedness are not synonymous.

Today, it is as irresponsible to imply to students that they have nothing in common as it was--in an earlier day-- to suggest that they are alike. And to deny our relationship with one another and with our common home Earth is to deny the realities of existence.

And this truth--it seems to me--is precisely the point where "the Humanities" move center stage.

- There is, I believe, more than an accidental connection between such words as human, humane and humanities.
- The terms identify an area of inquiry with people at the center.
- The humanities focus on the consequential common experiences of the human race
- and in so doing they seek to integrate and give meaning to all the disciplines--including science.
- They are concerned with significant connections.

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Nearly forty years ago, Mark Van Doren Wrote:

The connectedness of things is what the educator contemplates to the limit of his capacity. No human capacity is great enough to permit a vision of the world as simple, but if the educator does not aim at the vision no one else will, The student who can begin early in life to think of things as connected, even if he revises his view with every succeeding year, has begun the life of learning.

Begin the life of "human learning." But what are the universals that represent the core of learning?

Let me describe still more specifically just what it is I have in mind.

II.

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CARNEGIE FOUNDATION

QUEST FOR COMMON LEARNING

① CENTRALITY OF LANGUAGE

Uniquely Human
Separates us from other formsMIRACLE OF LANGUAGE
— USE OF SYMBOLS~~ARE~~ NOT JUST WRITTEN SYMBOLSDANCE VISUAL ARTS
MUSIC

← TEST OF THE CIVILIZATION →

LINDA BOVE → ROBT FROST
TWO PATHS

WE MUST SUPPORT THE ARTS - SUPPORT CIVILIZATION

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SECOND

ALL STUDENTS SHOULD LEARN ABOUT
OUR ^{shared} MEMBERSHIP IN INSTITUTIONS
groups

Ralph Waldo Emerson said

We do not make a world of our own
But (we) fall into institutions already made
and have to accommodate ourselves to them.

Institutions touch almost every aspect
of our being

Economic educational

family, political and religious

We are born into institutions

We pass much of our life in institutions

And we are buried by institutions.

Whether institutions smother or enhance the individual
is an issue of great consequence

~~Master not slave~~

MASTER OR SLAVE

THRO. ~~STUDY~~ WE ARE ALL BUSY PRODUCING & CONSUMING

AND STUDENTS SHOULD EXAMINE
HOW WORK REFLECTS THE VALUES
AND SHAPES THE SOCIAL CLIMATE OF A CULTURE.

THE URGE TO BE ACTIVE AND USEFUL
IS FOUND IN EVERY AGE & ~~CULTURE~~ EVERY SOCIAL UNIT

~~THROUGHOUT THE - ALMOST EVERYONE IS KEPT BUSY
PRODUCING & CONSUMING~~

WE NEED THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF OUR FELLOW
HUMAN BEINGS -

AND THEY NEED FROM US -
SOME THING IN RETURN

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW CAUGHT THE POINT
WHEN HE SAID -

"WE HAVE NO MORE RIGHT TO CONSUME HAPPINESS
WITHOUT PRODUCING IT
THAN TO CONSUME WEALTH
WITHOUT PRODUCING IT."

VALUES - WHO WORK

WHY DO THEY WORK

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WE ARE DEPENDENT ON EACH OTHER

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THE WHOLE IS OR CAN BE GREATER THAN
THE SUM.

SINGLE TERMINES

RANDOM MINDLESS MOVEMENTS

3rd 4

GEOM OF AN IDEA

Thanks

A BRAIN

Termitoxia

Exquisite Frisks

Ford

Cooley System.

Not just an economic question
social
humane question

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II.

Recently, in a little essay entitled A Quest for Common Learning, The Carnegie Foundation discussed six broad themes that students should study to understand themselves, their society, and the world in which they live. This seems relevant to the focus of this conference because they put humanities at the core.

First, the sending and receiving of messages separates all human beings from all other forms of life.

- Language is the connecting tissue that binds society together and we propose that at the core all students, should study and become proficient in the use of symbols--indeed, there are those who equate humanities with language and its uses.
- Students should understand why and how language has evolved, how messages reveal the values of a culture.
- Students should explore, as well, how we communicate nonverbally, through music, dance, and the visual arts. They should understand how these forms of expression convey subtle meanings, express intense emotions, and how, uniquely, the arts can stir a deep response in others.

Second, all students should understand that we are born into institutions, we pass much of our lives in institutions, and institutions are involved when we die.

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- "We do not make a world of our own," Ralph Waldo Emerson observed nearly 150 years ago, "but fall into institutions already made, and have to accommodate ourselves to them. . ." Institutions are a fact of life. They touch almost every aspect of our being--economic, educational, familial, political, and religious. We are born into institutions; we pass much of our lives in institutions; and institutions are involved when we die.
- The general education curriculum we have in mind would look at the origin of institutions; how they evolve, grow strong, become oppressive or weak, and sometimes die.

Third, students should examine the the universal experience of producing and consuming and examine how work patterns reflect the values and shape the social climate of a culture.

- The urge to be active and useful is found in every age and culture. Throughout life, almost everyone is kept busy producing and consuming. We need the contributions of our fellow human beings and they need, from us, something in return. George Bernard Shaw caught the point when he said: "We have no more right to consume happiness without producing it than to consume wealth without producing it." Students should understand that everyone produces and consumes and that, through this process, we are dependent on each other. This is an essential part of common learning.

There is a fourth theme that touches the humanities. All life forms on the planet earth are inextricably interlocked, and no education is complete without an understanding of the ordered, interdependent nature of the universe.

- ° Lewis Thomas, in his Phi Beta Kappa Oration at Harvard University, said that:

There are no solitary, free-living creatures:

Every form of life is dependent on other forms.

The great successes in evolution, the mutants who have, so to speak, made it, have done so by fitting in with, and sustaining, the rest of life.

Up to now we might be counted among the brilliant successes, but flashy and perhaps unstable. We should go warily into the future, looking for ways to be more useful, listening more carefully for the signals, watching our step, and having an eye out for partners.

The study of humanities means learning about the elegant, underlying patterns of the natural world and discovering that all elements of nature, in some manner, are related to each other.

Fifth, all students should understand that our common heritage is a bridge that holds us all together in ways we hardly understand.

- It is more than this.
- It is what Edmund Burke termed "a pact between the dead, the living, and the yet unborn."
- It is essential that the human race remember where it has been and how, for better or worse, it got where it is.
- An understanding of our heritage should be expected of all students.

T.S. Eliot--future--the future has be predetermined.

Finally, all students should explore values and beliefs.

- Education, by its very nature, is value-laden. Any institution committed to inquiry into the human experience must inevitably confront questions of purpose and meaning.
- The refusal to face those issues openly and directly is, itself, a moral decision with far-reaching implications.

The late Jacob Bronowski, in a vivid description of his 1945 visit to Nagasaki harbor, raised deeply unsettling questions about education's response to humanity's most profound concerns:

I had blundered into this desolate landscape as instantly as one might walk among the craters of the moon. The moment of recognition when I realized I was already in Nagasaki is present to me as I write, as vividly as when I lived it. I see the warm night and the meaningless shapes; I can even

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remember the tune which had been popular in 1945, and it was called "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't Ma Baby?"

For Bronowski, the lyrics of the dance tune took on macabre overtones.

- ° It was, he felt, a "universal moment," one in which modern man's knowledge was transformed into horror.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki--not to mention Buchenwald and Auschwitz--may, from one perspective, be irrelevant to the educational issues we confront today.

- ° Still, they have the odd effect of forcing us to inquire once again into deeply troubling, and perhaps unanswerable, questions about knowledge and its uses; about the relationship between education and human conduct.
- ° The destruction Bronowski witnessed was a technological achievement built on trained intelligence, and we cannot help wondering what discipline of mind, what knowledge more adequately comprehended, what values more effectively conveyed could have an equally powerful impact for human betterment?

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Howard Munford Jones wrote in 1958 that

"perhaps nobody knows how to make any human being better, happier or more capable, but at the very least, the humanities. . . help to sustain a course of thought in which these questions have meaning. . ."

In the end, the aim of education is not only to prepare the young for careers, but to enable them to live lives of dignity and purpose, not only to generate new knowledge, but to channel that knowledge to humane ends.

America's colleges and universities need an inner compass of their own.

- o They must perform for society--through humanities--an integrative function, seeking appropriate responses to life's most enduring questions, concerning themselves not just with information and knowledge, but with wisdom.

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I quote again Lewis Thomas.

At a recent meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science acknowledging that these are not the best of times for the human mind, went on to observe:

I cannot begin to guess at all the causes of our cultural sadness, not even the most important ones, but I can think of one thing that is wrong with us and eats away at us: we do not know enough about ourselves. We are ignorant about how we work, about where we fit in, and most of all about the enormous, imponderable system of life in which we are embedded as working parts.

This is seems to me is education's most essential mission.

° And this means we must place humanities at the core.