

Opinion, Debate, and The University

"Faculty Forum"(*) for January 1971 brings this intriguing excerpt:

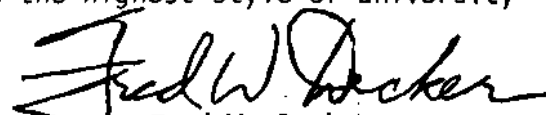
The distinction between debatable and undebatable subjects—between opinion and knowledge—abounds in the dialogues of Plato. It is epitomized in the distinction between virtue and geometry. Virtue cannot be taught because it is debatable, while geometry can, just because it is not debatable. From the contrast emerges a principle: the teachability of subjects varies with their debatable character. And the principle furnishes some guidance for the ordering of a young man's studies. He should proceed from the undebatable to the debatable, from the realm of knowledge to the realm of opinion. He should not proceed conversely. This latter way may, doubtless, be more exciting, more stimulating, and more spectacular, for the young alone are precocious and can be pushed with little effort to express with confidence opinions which astonish their elders. Their parents, anxious about their education and hopeful for their future, are readily impressed by any evidence of precociousness and would gladly see in it proof of the presence of genius. There is, besides, something eloquent and arresting in the spectacle of a young man of twenty having settled so soon questions which his parents, at the end of their lives, find have never been settled to their own satisfaction. Yet the admiration dims a little when youth begins to instruct age, finds fault with its convictions and prejudices, demands to take the realm of opinion in its own hands, and justifies the demand by what has gone on in the school. Nature, thinks Plato, has provided enough healthy opposition between youth

and age to make us cautious of increasing it by education. He seriously questions whether the young have any right to opinions about the unsettled before they have reasonably mastered the settled. His reason is profound. It is not that he would keep things forever as they are, for he put the perfect city in the sky where it need never change and let Ulysses make the choice we are to remember. He was a revolutionist, a man of novel ideas, and Socrates was put to death. Clearly his recommendation is not that of a stand-patter. His reason is that disinterested discipline may give a man balance, while interested discipline most assuredly will not. He knew well enough that opinions early formed are the hardest to outgrow, and when outgrown often leave a man without chart or compass, while those later formed are far more susceptible to change and adjustment. In spite of the protests of youth, it is age and experience which are liberal. It is age and experience that hesitate to cramp and confine and to close the door of opportunity, for, otherwise, youth would not be allowed to be what it is. It is not young men who do justice, but old men, even rich old men like Cephalus, who do it and do it without troubling themselves very much about what it is. So Plato would keep the young out of the realm of the debatable until they had matured a little in the realm of the undebatable. Then he would let them into the former, trusting the grace of God to do the rest.

—From *The Son of Apollo* by F. J. E. Woodbridge (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929).

Does the university set a good example in dealing with controversial subjects? Some academics question the whole procedure of having itinerant speakers like a socialist M.P. from Northern Ireland now touring the U.S. provided with lush lecture fees for uncontested, non-debate lectures on topics clearly debatable. Members of audiences cannot insist upon answers from such a speaker who evades or claims not to understand a question from the floor. Debate with a qualified adversary can best assure full exposure of controversial topics.

The American universities do no credit to their academic stature in generously financing these "single acts", regardless of box-office appeal. Universities have a higher tradition than merely to put on side-shows which do not utilize the style of the Cambridge debates. Students, whose fees pay these speakers, deserve a more intellectual exposure of contemporary controversial topics than frustration by severe time limits, a speaker's evasion of floor questions, false "facts", and the lack of a skilled adversary spokesman on the platform. How better can university students enter "the realm of the debatable" than through demonstration of the adversary approach in the highest style of university debate?


Fred W. Decker

23 Feb. 1971

* "Faculty Forum", Nashville, Tenn., published by agencies of the National Council of Churches, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church U.S., and campus Christian Foundations.

TENURE AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Recent remarks that have been appearing in the public press regarding removal of tenure for academic personnel have many serious implications that should be of vital concern to all of us. Tenure is directly connected with academic freedom. Without tenure the present over-reaction and repressive atmospheres could push us closer and closer to the prophecies of "1984".

Within our own lifetimes we have experienced the governmental control of education in Japan, Germany and Russia. Fear of reprisal by independent thinkers combined with "sympathizers of the system" can result in the rewriting of history to fit the needs of those in power. Da Vinci had the airplane on the drawing board, but who invented it? Was the radio invented by a German or a Russian? It depends on who writes the history.

The search for truth is the prerogative of the academician. It is not only his prerogative, but it is his responsibility. Control of university thought by governmental bodies will stifle the search for knowledge and the exposition of it.

Just because there may be a horse thief in eastern Oregon, it does not follow that all people from eastern Oregon are horse thieves. Nor does it make sense to say that because there is a radical or indolent professor on a campus that all professors are radicals or indolent. It still remains to be proven that Oregon students are bombers, and yet both students and faculty are being figuratively tried, convicted and executed.

Over 2,300 years ago Socrates drank his cup of hemlock for daring to express his opinion. Academic freedom has been a cherished part of the university system from its inception 700 years ago. Tenure, too, was a part of system administered by the guilds of master scholars.

In the 13th century students and scholars were involved in "Kent State" incidents. In Paris in 1200 A.D. five students were victims of soldier brutality after a tavern skirmish. Again in Paris in 1229 seven of eight innocent students were fatal victims of "police brutality".

The faculty is in an acrimonious situation between the students' struggle for more voice and freedom in university affairs and the taxpayers' struggle for more voice and more control. Without tenure the faculty is in a precarious position and eventually teaches only what is prescribed by the Ministry of Education, or he moves to more challenging areas.

February 25, 1971



Karl F. Drlica
Associate Professor of
Physical Education
Coach of Rowing

FACULTY FORUM

This year promises to be another grim year for salary increases. Although in the last two years salary increases for most of us fell short of the increases in cost of living, we can expect further deterioration in the next two years.

Our Chancellor recommended to the Governor that our salaries be increased by 7.49% in the first year and by 5.88% in the second year. The Governor trimmed these figures to 6% for the first and to 4.35% for the second year. Prominent members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee of the Legislature are quoted by the press as saying that they will cut these figures by at least a third.

Representatives of the O.S.E.A., the A.A.U.P., and the Inter-institutional Faculty Senate have testified before the Salary Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee twice and will again. They have also testified before an ad hoc committee organized and chaired by Representative Ingalls. This committee was composed of representatives of districts where colleges and universities are located. During all of these hearings representatives from O.S.U. University of Oregon, O.C.E., and Portland State University have worked together.

Despite our efforts, the prospects remain dim. You might ask what is causing our trouble. The answer lies in the fact that our tax system with its present rates simply cannot meet the claims arising from expenses of a state with an expanding population and a growing economy. Without increasing our tax rates we have not been able to cover our needs adequately even before inflation began. We have made many economies over the years, some real and some false or temporary. Support for many programs in the state has grown so thin that further erosion may soon prove serious. Some time in the future this state will face a serious crisis unless the people agree to raise taxes.

The political leaders of the state insist that the people will not permit any increase in taxes, at least in the foreseeable future. While inflation increases the need for additional revenues, it also stiffens opposition to increased taxes. Our leaders may be right. Perhaps only a serious crisis can create the climate necessary for a tax increase.

In the meantime, the Legislature will wrestle with the conflicting claims of welfare costs, school support, property tax relief, the cost of higher education, and other urgent expenses. The effects of limiting support for higher education are not as noticeable as some others. As long as our campuses swarm with students, compete effectively in athletic contests, print numerous diplomas, and possess the superficial characteristics of colleges and universities, we find it difficult to demonstrate the erosion of our institutions. We are simply not believed when we assert that lack of support will seriously harm Oregon's most valuable asset. Changes in quality are subtle and develop slowly. Members of the Legislature may even believe that temporary austerity may not produce permanent damage. We know that even temporary austerity means opportunities which may be lost forever. Prolonged austerity would doom us to mediocrity.

Somehow we must persuade our fellow Oregonians that our colleges and universities are not luxuries but are necessary investments in Oregon's future. Not only can we afford quality education, but we cannot afford to allow our state to be without it.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L. G. Harter, Jr.".

L. G. Harter, Jr.
Chairman
Faculty Economic Welfare
Committee
February 26, 1971

TO ACT OR NOT TO ACT

I am sure that most of us notice a tendency among our fellow citizens to do things, to act positively, to change, modify, adjust and otherwise fiddle with social, political and physical mechanisms. We accept this tendency as "normal", "progressive" and "prudent"; indeed it is characteristic of our society, but whether it is all that is claimed by its protagonists is a moot question.

I have come to a reluctant personal conclusion that most of us who wish to change things have no idea what is involved and merely want change for change's sake. They seldom offer alternatives that are any better or even as good as the thing they wish to alter, and in general they have no conception of the interactions that usually make the change less efficient, more complex, and more expensive than the original situation. In virtually any field of human endeavor, there are ways to make a process more complicated, more difficult and more wasteful of material and labor. There are always people who think in terms of problems rather than situations, who think in terms of victory rather than accommodation, who think in terms of empires and pyramiding complexities. And there are always those who think "as they ought to be", rather than "as they are".

It is odd that in thousands of years of human civilization, the idea has never become established that there is no virtue in creating or exacerbating problems merely to keep people busy trying to solve them. I suppose that it is natural for people to congregate to do things, to make great decisions and to alter mechanisms, but it is not rational. There appears to be a natural tendency among men to loathe solitude and reflection and to band together to find problems whose immediate solution is vital to our health, morals, stability, sanity, etc., etc. The fact that such groups invariably create more problems than they solve is apparently never noticed, and the new problems are happily seized upon by other groups which in turn proceed to add further complexities to existence.

I wonder why it never apparently occurs to people who think in terms of problems that the process is much like that of a degenerative disease that feeds upon and ultimately destroys its host? Does it never occur to those who deplore the social economic and ecological morass of today's civilization that the whole mess is the direct result of fostering expectations that rise faster than ability to fulfill them? Has the Malthusian equation never been applied to desires as well as food? It seems to me that the comparison of

the geometric rise of wants and the arithmetic rise of the capabilities to satisfy those wants is just as valid as the geometric rise in population and the arithmetic rise in food supply. We can, of course, forestall the day of reckoning with temporary expedients, but we can do no more than delay it. It seems that we have no idea of proportion since we are invariably trying to do now the things which we cannot do until next year or maybe next century. We seem to be obsessed with immediacy and have neither the understanding of history nor evolution that will allow us to apply logic to our lives.

We must say things when nothing needs to be said. We must do things when nothing needs to be done. We must create Utopia today, or at least no later than tomorrow. We must replace the old familiar irritations with ones we are unable to comprehend. And as the adrenal response increases with every new complexity we introduce, the general adaptation syndrome of society becomes increasingly strained until the insoluble pressures will inevitably collapse its fabric and we will drown in the sea of problems we have created.

It seems to me that this is a time for retrenchment rather than exacerbation, that instead of applying the classic dictum "Don't STAND there! DO Something!", we should apply another dictum that might read "Don't Just Do Something! STAND THERE!"



Jesse F. Bone
Veterinary Medicine

February 25, 1971

THE UNIVERSITY -- WHOSE REALITY?

I. The University as a Setting for Learning

One continuing gripe of many professors is about the seeming divergence of student-faculty-administration views of university life. Let's explore some differing conceptions of the "reality" that is the university, starting with the more prosaic student-professor relationships. What do many members of each sub-community make of their interaction? The following ideas represent some superficial but hopefully suggestive interpretations of differing orientations from various vantage points.

A. Student Orientations (and Professorial Interpretations of Student Roles)

Probably most students take a pragmatic view of their university experience: it's pretty much what one has to undergo in order to get a better job, possibly find a wife, and get to the real business of living. From the student point of view, perhaps in caricature, the GPA (grade point average) seems to be the top goal. This viewpoint certainly is not acknowledged as a worthy long-range goal in terms of the scholarly professor's orientation. Apparent student attitudes may be paraphrased thusly: "Why give obeisance to learning when it's your record (or GPA) that counts!" Probably a large proportion of students "deep down" think this way, although only a small proportion may be so frank as to express this attitude to their mentors--the profs who grade them and who may serve as writers of letters of recommendation to their prospective employers.

Professors generally feel that student-teacher contacts leading to favorable letters of recommendation prove of greater importance than grades in job placement and that students are overlooking a good bet by not "cultivating a prof or two." Perhaps this latter orientation is functional mainly for graduate school bound students for whom both course grades and favorable references pay off. But more than most students probably realize until late in their higher educational career (if at all), men in business concerns give considerable although varying weight to teacher evaluations and reports of extracurricular activities in assessing how "well rounded" are their prospective employees. Often all too late, many students come to realize the value of good contacts with teachers--usually when facing the challenge of completing applications for employment.

The student is not alone in facing problems of allocating time and energy most efficiently. He may not consciously decide how he plays "the college game," but he is making choices nonetheless. Perhaps his choice of means to the goals of job, marriage and philosophy of life by default (that is, by putting them off until later) seems "OK" to him. After all, isn't "doing one's own thing" or "getting by" or "living now" most important?

The professor is "only human" in tending to judge student behavior (and the apparent choices evidenced by that behavior) by standards more ideal than the ones he uses to judge his own behavior choices or his choices when he was a student. Be that as it may, the professor interprets much student behavior as "resistance to learning" and as "trying to get by with as little serious effort as possible." Among the questions which may be raised concerning the faculty member's impressions of college student behavior are these: Are these generally accurate assessments?

From whose viewpoints may such evaluations be judged valid? Under what conditions is such behavior likely to predominate? Considering the situations faced by students, are other interpretations closer to the mark?

B. Professor Orientations (and Student Responses to Professorial Expectations)

The professor has greater freedom of choice within the university setting than has the student. He can choose what his students must study "to aid them in their mastery of the subject matter," that is, upon what they will be graded. But the "prof" as well as the "stude" is caught up in the grading and credential allocation system. The teacher may be more aligned on the side of "management" in "the community of scholars." Within that frame of reference the instructor can't fully appreciate student behavior. Yet he sympathizes with students in general. After all, he was one himself--once. He may even consider himself still a student; but if so, he conceives of student roles differently than does the present-day student.

The teacher often keeps trying to change student orientations and priorities. He tries to remain hopeful that many students will realize and practice a spirit of inquiry which embodies its own intrinsic rewards such as satisfactions experienced in the process of learning. Yet the teacher is often, if not continuously, discouraged by the apparent iceberg-like attitudes of student resistance expressed in concern for points on exams and relative standing on the curve after each exam. The questions, if any, raised after an exam by most students seem far from the mark of an inquiring mind. The prof prefers that exams be seen and used as learning devices having feedback functions and thus serving as means toward at least intermediate goals. The student's attitudes he hopes to encourage might be expressed in statements such as: "I'm trying hard to find where I missed basic understanding in regard to this topic" or even, "How may I improve my reasoning in support of the correct choice I made for this multiple choice item."

C. "The Meaning of Learning" -- A Tentative Conclusion

Assuming that the foregoing expressions of ideas are reasonably accurate interpretations of student and professorial viewpoints, let us consider this "simple" conclusion: Learning for the student isn't what it is or should be, as seen by the professor. Further facets in exploring the meanings of learning could be profitably pursued; but let us consider more specifically the various goals and means generally implicit in people's conceptions of the university. This will involve our investigating possible conceptual models or "ideal images" of the university held by some students, some faculty members, and some administrators.

II. Organizational Models of "The University Reality"

The conceptual models of the university are characterized in Blau and Scott's classification,* a mutual benefit association (to/for the students), a service

* Peter M. Blau and W. Richard Scott, FORMAL ORGANIZATIONS. (Chandler, 1962), pp. 42-58. "A Classification Based on Prime Beneficiary. ... Four types of organization result from the application of our cui bono ('who benefits') criterion: (1) 'mutual benefit associations,' where the prime beneficiary is the membership; (2) 'business concerns,' where the owners are the prime beneficiary; (3) 'service organizations,' where the client group is the prime beneficiary; and (4) 'commonweal organizations,' where the prime beneficiary is the public-at-large. ..." (p. 43.4/.6). A dittoed page of Blau and Scott's description of characteristics and problems of each type of formal organization--especially the dilemmas of overbureaucratization--is available from Wm. A. Foster, Sociology Department, upon request.

organization and partly a mutual benefit association (to/for the professors), and lastly, a business concern and partly a commonweal organization (to/for the administrators). How so? Do these different and frequently divergent conceptions make sense to various participants in university life? Let's give a try at some characterizations and judge for ourselves.

A. Students' Conceptions of the University

Some among the students are pushing for greater weight or "say" in the processes of university operation. Their model for justifying their desire for increased participation seems to be mainly that of a democratic voluntary association in which students would be represented in the policy formulation processes. Such an organization is exemplified by a consumers' cooperative, at least in theory. Students are technically free to drop and/or change courses--or even universities--if they don't like or find "relevant" the products offered therein. Naturally they want to improve the service, perhaps in a "having your cake and eating it" sort of way. Students tend to overlook or de-emphasize the problems inherent in big (and thus bureaucratic) social operations--be they educational, religious, governmental, or private industry. Their ideal is likely represented by the type of formal organization classified as a mutual benefit association. Some students might idealize this goal as a "cooperative commonwealth."

B. Administrators' Viewpoints Regarding the University

This ideal goal of many students stands in contrast with the model seemingly held by many administrators. While giving lip service to quality education, they are caught in a bind of "efficiency" due in part to trying to coordinate (manipulate?) numerous students and a diversity of professors and functions. The problem of balancing contradictory goals of quality-quantity are many and varied. Such issues are generally "resolved" by focusing on quantifiable measures of efficiency. This resolution is often undertaken at the behest of trustees and, for public higher educational bodies, is in turn due to legislative demand to justify "wise management of the educational trust" to the general public. Many administrators tend to give greater weight to quantity while continuing to profess concern for quality.* After all, how does the intangible quality of learning in an educational process get measured--let alone effectively measured?

And just what is the model of the university held by many administrators? I suggest that it is the image of the business concern.** Conceiving of the university as a private corporation adds some important nuances of meaning. The university is seen as a business at least to the extent that it uses businesslike methods and criteria for evaluation of the "product lines." Of course the university is established and maintained to function in the interests of serving (1) the public and (2) the student-clients by providing educational services. In the light of these functions it would be conceived of as a commonweal organization and a service organization respectively. Do these public functions exhaust the possible consequences of universities? Are there not latent or less-recognized functions of

* Such public calls for increased excellence, when not supported by material means for their achievement, are seen as "bureaucratic lip service" by many nonadministrators both within and outside the university. Is the judgment that many university administrators are guilty of such lip service well deserved?

** Note Blau and Scott's characterization of this type of organization in the footnote on the previous page.

"training the fitable and sorting out the unfit" for smooth transition into the standardized corporate world of work? But let us not digress at this juncture.

There are disadvantages in adhering to the model of the business concern however, since the limitations of "bureaucracy" afflict many universities and certainly all large ones. As a result, top administrators and most of those down the line are also caught in the muddle of bureaucratic machinery, now "facilitated" by computer technology. Whether or not an accurate account of bureaucratic functioning, Parkinson's law seems to have relevance in university governance!

C. Professors' Expectancies of the University

Now let's reconsider the professor and his multivalent orientations. He faces contradictory goals which result in persistent decision-making problems. Even if he doesn't recognize conflicting goals, he is torn between different means of promoting scholarly learning. The teacher also has frustrations and inner dilemmas regarding students, administrators, professional colleagues, the public, and himself. He has limited resources of time, energy (and money!) to allocate among school, family and community participation. He needs leisure for keeping open opportunities to gain perspective and recharge his emotional-intellectual energies. The problems of balancing teaching, research and community service constitute the standard role conflict of the university professor.

The professor, in many senses similar to the student, generally desires greater opportunities for sharing in policy formulation and implementation in the university, particularly his own branch of it. He already has more responsibility and accountability in decision-making than does the student; but a major question in this regard is felt by many professors, namely: How equitably is this "privilege" distributed among faculty members in terms of proportional representation by schools and departments within the university? Of course the further question is likely to be raised: Should it be?

Many teachers tend to view the university as more of a service organization than a mutual benefit association or a commonweal organization. The professor's position is conceived of as that of a colleague on a professional staff, while at the same time he may recognize partial validity of the perspectives held by many students and administrators of "the university reality." Ramifications of these differing self- and other-perspectives need consideration but will not be undertaken in this paper.

III. Summary

Differing views of learning in the university context held by many students, professors and administrators are suggested in this paper. In many respects, members of each subcommunity have their distinctive sets of goals for the university and in turn emphasize differing means for their attainment. To briefly consider the various views, I have focused on four models of the university conceptualized as "ideal types of formal organizations," based on the classification of Blau and Scott.

This is a preliminary formulation presented in the hope of stimulating individual thought leading to discussion and possibly to constructive ferment in our "university community." Such joint explorations may clarify possible underlying misunderstandings among participants in the university. I hope that such resulting interchange as develops will serve as a basis for increased communication and more effective cooperative endeavor.

Wm. A. Foster

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Sociology Department
February 25, 1971

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF MANUSCRIPTS FOR THIS PUBLICATION

The "OSU Faculty Forum Papers", a publication for the exchange of faculty opinions concerning university affairs, is published monthly through the office of the Dean of Faculty with the assistance of a faculty advisory committee. Guidelines for this publication were approved by the Faculty Senate on March 7, 1968 and appear in the March 15, 1968 edition of the Staff Newsletter. The guidelines contain the following directions for the preparation of manuscripts:

- a. Must be authored by a faculty member eligible for election to the Senate according to the provisions of Section 2 of Article IV of the Bylaws.
- b. Should be typed in a form which can be reproduced directly without the need of retyping or rearranging. Short papers of one or two pages may be typed with either single or double spacing to make best use of full pages. Longer papers must be single spaced. Other requirements:
 - (1) Use 8-1/2" x 11" plain white bond paper (sub.20)
 - (2) Type on one side of page only
 - (3) Do not number or fold sheets
 - (4) Leave at least 1-1/2" margin at the top of all pages
- c. Should not exceed a reasonable length. A six page limit is suggested, including displays such as tables or graphs. If this limit is exceeded, publications will require approval of the faculty advisory committee.
- d. Should be signed (use black ink) and dated by the author at the end. The author's name and a subject, if appropriate, may be typed at the heading of the first page of the paper.
- e. Manuscripts are to be submitted to the office of the Dean of Faculty. Receipt of each manuscript will be acknowledged. For each monthly publication, the deadline for the receipt of manuscripts shall be noon of the last full working day (Monday thru Friday) of the preceeding month.