1977

Concepts of Career and General Education

Paul A. Olson
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, polson2@unl.edu

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Concepts of Career and General Education

Paul A. Olson

ERIC/Higher Education Research Report No. 8
1977

Prepared by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education
The George Washington University
Washington, D.C. 20036

Published by the American Association for Higher Education
One Dupont Circle, Suite 780
Washington, D.C. 20036
This publication was prepared pursuant to a contract with the National Institute of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their judgment in professional and technical matters. Prior to publication, the manuscript was submitted to the American Association for Higher Education for critical review and determination of professional competence. This publication has met such standards. Points of view or opinions do not, however, necessarily represent official views or opinions of either the American Association for Higher Education or the National Institute of Education.
The pedagogical style and curriculum content of higher education have never been static, but slowly evolved as the social mission has changed. In the past, higher education served mainly the upper class whose main objective was to learn the "classics" for their own sake or to prepare for professional training. Thus the liberal arts and schools of medicine and law predominated.

With the development of a more egalitarian emphasis and, as the result of the industrial revolution, a need to integrate new scientific discoveries with the activities of business and industry, there occurred increased pressure on higher education to change its approach. The creation of the land-grant colleges and a general education curriculum was the response to this pressure. As stated in the Harvard report, General Education in a Free Society: "The true task of education is therefore so to reconcile the sense of pattern and direction deriving from heritage with the sense of experiment and innovation deriving from science that they may exist fruitfully together. . . ."

During the last ten years certain conditions have once again developed that are forcing higher education to reevaluate itself. With the recession of the early 1970's, society saw college graduates as not being a marketable commodity or, if they were employed, their economic return barely made the investment in a college education worthwhile. The result of this perception was a demand that higher education become more career oriented at the undergraduate level.

Many institutions have responded to these pressures by changing the focus of their curriculum. Others have not changed but instead challenged the wisdom and truth of society's perception. While both positions disagree on the approach to education, they both generally agree that the mission of higher education is rightfully determined by society. It is therefore important to review the two basic curriculum approaches—general education and career education—to see what evidence exists to support the claims or counterclaims that one approach is better than the other in achieving the mission of higher education.

Paul A. Olson, professor of English at the University of Nebraska, has developed such a review. In this report Professor Olson has examined these two approaches in light of the general historical and philosophical development of higher education. The reader should
find this report refreshing, as it cuts through the current rhetoric and adds substance to a somewhat cloudy issue.

Jonathan D. Fife, Director
ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education
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Introduction: Some Definitions

This paper examines the distinctions between general education and education for a career, with a view to synthesizing the literature and presenting salient problems. General education can be defined in several ways. It is defined here as education that puts a person in touch with the main outlines of knowledge available to a historical period or a given culture. Theoretically, education is general if it has no one specific vocation as its end and no one specific discipline or partisan viewpoint as its specialty. By way of example, the medieval quadrivium and trivium can be viewed as "general education," in that they provided the clerk with most of what was known about the ancient world, the Bible, linguistics, and number-related subjects. Charles William Eliot's elective system was general education in the sense that what could be elected included courses in most of what was thought to be known in the period (Hawkins 1972). And Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler's "great books" plan was general education in the sense that it assumed crucial knowledge, apart from vocational knowledge, to be contained in a certain library of seminal books, books which all serious scholars would have to read (Adler 1967; Hutchins 1936, Ch. 3; Hutchins 1950; Boyer and Kaplan, March 1977, pp. 22-24).

Again, one may describe as general education various Bruneresque or Piagetian college curricula that are designed to put students in touch with the central paradigms, epistemologies, or investigation logics of the academic fields in the sense that they try to get at root investigatory methodologies whereby reality is either constructed or ordered—the main research or knowledge finding tools (Little 1974-75, pp. 83-110; Bell 1966; Peterson 1969, pp. 165-192; Fuller 1975). Finally, what is called general education is often a description of required courses or required "elective" courses in college, particularly courses required by the Arts and Sciences college but now increasingly also required by Colleges of Education, Business, Engineering and the like. Though many rationales have been devised for such course listings, they may best be understood, in the practical sense, as advising tools that assure us that all academic departments have sufficient numbers of large undergraduate classes within the ratios prescribed by conventional full-time equivalencies (Lockwood, May 23, 1977, p. 32; Tetrow 1974, pp. 23-28). In sum, general education may
be a conception of (a) encyclopedic education; (b) education in seminal authors; (c) education in primary investigative paradigms or logics; and (d) an advising tool designed to assure fairly even distribution of students among the early college courses. Obviously, "general education" is not a concept having a very "generally received" definition (Bell 1966). *Yet, in each case given here the common conceptual notion is that college will give the student something crucial to later life that cannot be learned from the experience of the workspace, street, or play area.*

Career education, on the other hand, is education whose chase has a quarry in view. It is education "to prepare people to cope with accelerating change and obsolescence," "to increase the relation between schools and society," "to relate the subject matter of the curriculum to the needs of persons to function in society," to develop "the sense of meaning in one's life" and to make a person's "life work . . . possible, satisfying, and meaningful." It is usually connected with such phrases as "finding meaningful work," "beginning a satisfying career." The proponents of career education commonly wish to differentiate it from vocational education, which they see as narrowly skills-oriented (What typing speed does it take to be a clerk-secretary I at IBM? and How can we teach someone to type at that speed in the shortest possible time?), and from conventional liberal education, which they see as not furnishing people with the wherewithal to function at all in a complex society (What is the nature of the good?; W. H. Auden's "Poetry Makes Nothing Happen"). Career education is supposed to give a person the tools to find what (s)he wants to do over long stretches of time not only as job-holder but also as hobbyist, citizen, house man or woman—the tools to make a life work meaningful.

It should be observed that what is considered appropriate general education varies radically from period to period as cultures develop new information and discard old modes of thought. Werner Jaeger has argued that Greek education is beyond culture in that, whereas "Chinese, Indian, Babylonia, Jewish or Egyptian cultures" were the products of highly organized nations that had an educational system, only the Greeks from the Homeric period to Demosthenes had "real culture," which has as its goal the "creation of a higher type of man" (Jaeger 1945, I, pp. xvi-xvii); and they alone developed the notion of education as constructing an ideal man by "molding character;" "throughout history whenever this conception appears, it is always inherited from the Greeks; and it always reappears when man abandons the idea of training the young like animals to perform cer-
tain definite external duties, and recollects the true essence of education” (Jaeger 1945, I, p. xxii).

For certain modern advocates of general education its purpose is that of ancient Greek education, to construct the model person. However, the present evidence suggests that such education is not possible under public support in the U.S.; many cultures have a conception of “ideal man” or a “range of ideal men,” and these conceptions differ; many educate their young to achieve some sort of ideal personhood; few simply “train their young like animals” to perform definite external duties only. Given the number of “definitions of man” available in our society and their connection to certain fixed religious systems, ideologies, and value systems, public education institutions in this land are in no position to proclaim a general education that creates “ideal manhood” going beyond the culture, period, and place in which the educational system is located. Thus the justification for general education must either be multicultural, culturally neutral, or deal with those tools such as mathematics that are not culture-bound (Freeman 1975, pp. 124-150; Boyer and Kaplan, March 1977, pp. 22-27).

The notion of what constitutes a “career” also changes; in fact, some less individualistic ages than our own appear not to have held to the concept at all. What this topic invites then is a discussion of the ways in which education, particularly higher education, is understood as serving society, particularly the sense of vocation and of constructing meaning for one’s life in a human group that is not united and is not ecclesiastical in rule. Clearly, “higher” education cannot simply serve individuals as individuals, for unless some complementarity of callings is envisaged by members within the society, no society exists.

The real issues of this paper are: (1) Under what educational circumstances has it been or is it possible to give people a chance to construct a conception of “career” or “life’s work” or “useful social service,” while giving them an understanding of their world and a critical sense? (2) What are the circumstances that make “education for work” (or life’s work) turn into what people see as “training the young like animals to perform certain definite external duties?” (3) Concomitantly, what are the circumstances that make “general education” turn into education that does not “prepare people to cope with accelerating change and obsolescence,” prepare them to “function in society,” “develop a sense of meaning in work,” or “make a person’s life work possible, satisfying, and meaningful?” To answer these questions it may be useful to look at the history of liberal and then
general education in the Western World and of the development of capacity for work and for career in people in the same culture.
The Classical and Medieval Background

Initially in Western Civilization "general education" has to be equated with "liberal education," or less probably with guild education.

The original medieval conception of the liberal arts that gave rise to the twelfth century schools and the thirteenth century universities was at least as old as Martianus Capella (De Nuptiis), and perhaps older (Gwynn 1964, Ch. VI; Marrow 1956, Ch. VIII, XI, XII). But, the technical distinction between the liberal arts and the practical arts as it was set forth in Roman times was not a particularly meaningful distinction to the masters of the twelfth century, in that the conditions of freedom and of "slavery" had changed radically by then. Nevertheless, some knowledge of the classical background is necessary to an understanding of the later shifts.

The liberal arts, according to those who thought about them in classical times, were the arts that belonged to the free man, who was by definition intellectual, responsible, and capable of determining his own direction, whereas the technical arts were those of a slave who had to be guided as to purpose and could learn only the tricks of the trade (Peterson 1969, pp. 166-67). The difference lay in the degree of responsibility that one could take for one's own labor. For most classical thinkers, the study of the liberal arts was never divorced from work and general civic activity. Aristotle develops another conception of the free man much admired in the nineteenth century, the man given over to eudaemonia—the intellectual contemplation of "leisure which looks on the nature of things," examining them for what they are as apart from any civic appropriation. Tragedy, in Aristotle's world, is designed to appeal to eudaemonistic man. Aristotle's picture of the leisure, or the free, class given over to eudaemonia is at variance with Plato's tougher picture of the contemplative as a man who looks on the image of justice and is also the ruler of the ideal republic. It is from Plato that Cicero develops his somewhat similar Roman republican vision of the educated man as contemplative and ruler simultaneously. In Cicero's Republic (modeled on Plato's but set in history), the dream of Scipio is used as a vehicle for telling Scipio how to rule the commonwealth of Rome and how to serve the common profit of the people there. And Scipio's conception of the distinction between the liberal and the practical fore-
shadows the medieval conception. Chaucer paraphrases Cicero's conception nicely:

Thanne preyede hym Scipion to telle hym al
The wey to come into that hevene blisse.
And he seyde, "Know thyself first immortal,
And look ay besly thow werche and wysse
To Commune profit, and thos shalt not mysse
To comen swiftly to that place deere
That ful of blysse is and of soules cleere.

("Parlement of Foules," II, pp. 71-77)

Cicero's own mandate, put in the mouth of Scipio the Elder, is clearer as to the consequences of right contemplation:

Nothing that occurs on earth, indeed, is more gratifying to that supreme God who rules the whole universe than the establishment of associations and federations of men bound together by precepts of justice which are called commonwealths.

(W. H. Stahl, Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, p. 11.)

Indeed, Cicero is not far from setting forth the paradigm for the "liberal arts" in the middle ages. The development of the conception of liberal education as we know it comes from the twelfth century growth under the auspices of Christian country—of those grammar schools that foreshadowed the development of the Universities of Paris and Oxford and Cambridge (Paré, Brunet, and Tremblay, 1933; Rashdall 1936). The most helpful introduction to those schools were written by schoolmen themselves: Hugo of St. Victor, his Didascalion, and John of Salisbury, his Metalogicon (Hugo of St. Victor 1961; John of Salisbury 1955). Whereas many things went into the resurrection of humanistic studies at the schools of the twelfth century, it is clear that a primary impetus for their growth was the hope that, by studying more deeply in the subjects of the trivium and quadrivium, men would learn how better to explain the Bible so as to live, in a collective sense, more purposefully charitable lives. The revival of exegesis was connected to an effort to creat a cadre of priests and Biblical exegetes who would serve the parishes more effectively. The three verbal subjects in the trivium (rhetoric, grammar, and logic) were studied as a means to understanding the verbal surfaces of the scriptural texts (and also classical texts); the four scientific subjects of the quadrivium (music, geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy) were taught to impart an understanding of the nature of things so that the scriptures, poetry, and experiences that depended on seeing meaning in things would be understood. Students who studied at
the schools of Paris and mid-country England were often not "career scholars." They were men who were in search of a purpose and a place: a place at the secular or ecclesiastical courts, in the diplomatic or legal corps. Their period in school was not unrelated to a purposive and a vocational emphasis.

Indeed, the whole discipline of the liberal arts in the twelfth century was directed towards the discovery of purpose in life. Hugo of St. Victor speaks of the quadrivium and trivium as designed to help people understand the words of texts and the things of nature in a way that leads to the double love of God and neighbor, the guiding purposes of man's existence. Whether such goals were always kept in mind or not is not entirely clear, but it is clear that men who studied and pondered and argued and gave their lives or a good portion of their lives to books in the twelfth century did see themselves as finding new meaning for those lives. The meaning may have been, in the case of an Abelard, an ascetic meaning very remote from the meanings that most modern men are likely to find as a consequence of "liberal" or any other study; a meaning that denied the usefulness of the circus, the marketplace, sensual beauty, or any other worldly activity and affirmed the exercise of the solitary mind living apart from the resorts of cities and from conventional organized communities. But whereas Abelard seems to propose a purely "removed" conception of intellectual life, he at the same time developed out of the intellectual life that was his a conception of what the ideal community was like and made from his conception the orderly praxis of a model society, the convent of the Paraclete, where through the liturgical and work routine designed by him, the Paraclete nuns could carry into worship, action, and work his vision of an ascetic society (Robertson 1972).

Generally theoretical studies in the liberal arts of the twelfth century schools were fitted to giving one a sense of religious-philosophic purpose for life and were potent in providing some of the skills necessary for action in the upper reaches of the ecclesiastical or civil courts; they were also important tools in the shaping of the tasks of the practical or vocational artist. Otto von Simson has shown how the Gothic cathedrals of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, from the Abbey at St. Denis to the Cathedral at Chartres, were informed, in their architectural design and workmanship, by a sense of numerology, proportion, and harmony developed by quadrivium studies, and by their metaphysics of light. He has also shown how much of the architectural adornment of the medieval cathedral grew out of trivium and quadrivium studies of the Biblical iconography.
and symbolism. The great cathedrals of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries were not simply a product of art for the sake of art: they were an *eidolon* through which the civilization mediated its own sense of what it was and what was its purpose for being, an artifact in which the intellectual, the technician, and the clerical politician collaborated and in which their roles overlapped (Von Simson 1962).

The practical functions of the liberal arts study did not change radically with the rise of the university in the thirteenth century. Anyone who has scoured the bibliography of Oxford scholars covering the thirteenth through the early sixteenth centuries done by A. B. Emden will discover how closely the “liberal arts” curriculum of the medieval university was attached to specific vocations: the vocations of bureaucrat, clerk of the court, parish priest, parish clerk, barrister, lawyer, diplomatic courier, and diplomat (Emden 1957-59). The medieval university “liberal arts” program was a career education program that provided people with the basic skills necessary to a whole range of legal, quasi-legal, and ecclesiastical vocations requiring literacy in Latin, a capacity to do a careful exegesis and application of one or another kind of text, sophistication in logical analysis and argument, and a range of formal oratorical and disputational skills. It is difficult to trace exactly when these so-called “arts of the free man” came to be deemed important to leaders in the civil courts as well. It is clear that by the late fourteenth century, with the courts of Charles V of France and Richard II of England, the secular prince and his bureaucracy were also expected to know the liberal arts to carry on their business—and not simply to depend on clerks (Olson 1975, pp. 5-6).

For the nonlearned vocations, on the other hand, the guilds were the main sources of education. The guilds were, in organization and structure, very like the universities, corporations of people having the same occupation drawn together for mutual self-protection for the setting of standards of craft and for education. Guild education clearly was not “general education” but neither was it so behavioristic, so lacking in meaningful intellectual content as it has sometimes been thought to be. Guild activities frequently taught the members the elements of aesthetics, an appreciation for literature and drama of certain sorts, and elementary theology and typology, as well as subjects designed both to enhance the sense of the craft’s meaning and to broaden the mystery’s general understanding (Renard 1918, Ch. II and IV). What is obvious about such an education is that the whole social organization confirms the relationship between education and quality work.
Part of the reason for and, yet, difficulty of modern formal education is the invisibility of adult life in modern culture—the necessity therefore of creating a succession of fantasy and intellectual approximations of, guesses at, what adult life will be when the child or person arrives at maturity. In medieval village society and to some degree in seventeenth and eighteenth century town society in our country and in Europe, the number of roles was known; the roles were represented by different kinds of clothes for the different crafts (Aries 1962; Homans 1970; Van den Berg 1961; Laslett 1965). The shops were open and the skills that went into a craft were readily seen by a child or young person: “One did not belong to many groups: perhaps to the one at the smithy or the carpenter’s workshop, and perhaps to the group of the church. All groups were severely codified; no one had doubts about these codes . . . and . . . all the groups were strongly related since they were all rooted in the same life pattern” (Van den Berg, p. 167). There was no particular anxiety that the future for which the child or young adult was preparing would be gone by the time the adult arrived. Thus, the idea of education-for-something did not awaken anxiety, whether it was university education or guild education offered locally. Society and its small groups were confident that there was some “for” which was socially defined, visible, and sanctioned by a divine purpose that had ordered a three-estate society and small group or guild organization within the estates to clarify for men how they should serve each other.

If society has changed, the “individual” as a social product has also changed. The notion of career does not, I think, become important until the Reformation and post-Reformation invention of an inwardness, which allows the individual to go in directions other than those provided in society’s static hierarchies and open market-places.
Origins of Vocation, Career, and Education-for-Education's Sake: 1500-1800

"Inwardness" did not exist altogether in pre-Reformation and pre-Enlightenment times; it was not cultivated (what was cultivated was rather more like the flat personality that Bruno Bettelheim found to be characteristic of the Israeli kibbutz) (Bettelheim 1969). And where inwardness does not exist, the notion of some sort of inward envisioning of a career as apart from the social mythology is also meaningless. However, with the increasing disillusion with the actual performance of major institutional representatives of the grand hierarchies of society, whether Pope or King, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries comes an increasing tendency to posit the notion that, while actual societies may be corrupt, somewhere in the mind of God or the world of art or platonic ideas is laid up a perfect society that defines the actual duties of each worldly man. Gradually, as the older communal sense and social myth disintegrate in Northern European countries, the vision of an "ideal society" is more and more a vision that resides in the individual, and more and more defined as a call from God to a single person. Luther retains the old three-estate work order of society, but he reconstructs the notion of a "calling" vocation to make it a universal social phenomenon, not just the peculiar possession of the clergy in regular orders (Bainton 1950, pp. 232-246; Blayney 1957, p. 264; Bornkamm 1958, pp. 258-273). However, when every "job" is a "call from God" rather than a simple social requirement or convention, and where the encounter with God is preeminently a private encounter, as it is with Luther, the conception of what is constitutive of meaningful life work moves from the realm of the social to the subjective and the possibility of alienated work comes into being (Is this the work to which God has called me?). Eventually the word vocation is vulgarized to mean "job" (OED, 2b, first entry, 1552; most entries, eighteenth century and after), and the conception of how one arrives at a life plan is secularized. For many people the question is no longer What does God want me to do? What is my vocation?; it has become What is my plan for my life? What is the arc-carraria, career, which I project for the sum of my life? Not surprisingly, the first uses of the word "career," in the sense in which career education uses it, occur in post Enlightenment-Romantic England in a social order in which the primary sanctions for living are no longer theological but romantic and individual or
personal (OED, 5; first entry, 1803). The laissez-faire, industrial economy elaborated in the eighteenth century finds it necessary to destroy the guild system and create a free labor market in which every man is pitted against every other man; at every level of society the determination of what one is to be becomes an individual rather than a corporate matter. For the great, the notion of what one is to be is a matter of career determination; for the small fry the battle becomes red in tooth and claw. The possibility of either planning or looking forward to a coherent corporate life or a meaningful career is sharply delimited for the masses of mankind. The nineteenth century view of the word "career" excludes its being applied to ordinary lives.

After the Protestant Reformation there are a few basic external changes in medieval ideology with respect to liberal education, but these are asserted slowly.

In the sixteenth century, there is controversy over the inclusion of the mathematical subjects basic to sixteenth and seventeenth century science, its proponents arguing for the superior theoretical content of the new information and its possible practical application. There is a continuing debate with respect to the uses of rhetoric in relation to grammar and dialectic—whether rhetoric ought to be used primarily for its theoretical, scholarly content or for its practical value in assisting people in the writing of letters and the performing of routine civic responsibilities (Aries 1962, pp. 149-50). There is the Ramistic debate about rhetoric as the search for persuasive truth or the search simply for persuasive capacity—a debate very germane to our times (McIlmaine 1969). But all of these were debates about the form of the practical uses of liberal education, not about whether it was a practical, career-oriented pursuit.

In more recent times, the ancient-modern debate at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, that is, whether the “ancient” (classical) or “modern” (Renaissance and post-Renaissance scientific and vernacular) subjects in the liberal curriculum were valuable, did not change the prevailing sense that liberal studies were to inform the wisdom, purposefulness, and practical sense of the career man. Swift’s Munodi, the fictional representative of the ancients, is a learned practical farmer with a strong sense of career; Sprat, on the other hand, said that moderns would produce Bacon’s “New Atlantis” or a perfect scientific paradise. What was in dispute was whether certain empirical studies and certain re-interpretations of the world developed by the modern physical scientists ought to be included in the curriculum to maximize its practical usefulness. Neither side in the controversy took the view that the
function of the liberal disciplines was learning for the sake of learning. The function of the new disciplines was purposive and practical. The advocates of the Royal Society’s position speak of “the promotion of useful knowledge,” or “useful arts” (Bacon before them had spoken in the same vein). The early Royal Society members’ letters to the king and to the various patrons stress the useful, job-related content latent in the theoretical investigations that were about to be pursued. The whole design of the Royal Society was thrown up against the background of the new purposefulness that the nation hoped it would develop under Charles II as part of the royal ascendancy and the dawning of a new, peculiarly British-style monarchy (Jones 1969, pp. 10-40).

However, the individualism and millenialism of the Protestant Reformation and of ideological currents abroad in Europe were felt in educational ideology with respect to what education is supposed to be. Increasingly academic philological sorts of classical studies separated from ethical education appeared. Astronomers and mathematicians, such as Kepler, turned from the practical business of discovering the harmonies that made the music of the spheres and ordinary music (which therefore implied the order necessary for living bodies as well as buildings), to a paradigm-breaking search for the relationship among events themselves seen as ends in themselves reflecting ideas in the mind of God (Casper 1959, pp. 376-384).

Even more important was the development of the notion of delayed payoff in the search for knowledge, the notion that a purely speculative search would eventually carry such radical content that it would allow man to control nature so as to wipe out the fallen-from-grace aspect and construct from the knowledge of Nature and Nature’s Author a redemptive society. This is the promise of Bacon’s New Atlantis, his Advancement of Learning, and Novum Organum, and of hundreds of other apologies for the scientific pursuit that succeeded Bacon. As Western society became less certain that it was doing the “right” thing, as the search for knowledge was increasingly seen to have redemptive and transformative power and not primarily the power of maintenance of the culture, education came gradually to serve different ends. No longer could it posit altogether fixed social roles, a future coherent with the present, and a clear picture of social obligation. One of the criticisms leveled against scientists in Gulliver’s Travels, Book III, is that their picture of a world transformed by science does not permit the sort of static education that tells people what they are to do to and for one another in unequivocal terms. Rather education becomes the playground of idio-
syncratic men who have no sense of job or social obligation—no picture of a career and no realization of what long-established traditions of learning can do to make one more effective in the performance of conceived social roles.

Simultaneous with the broadening of the area that education took as its province, which resulted from the development of scientific study of the universe for its own sake, came other sorts of social changes that meant that education began to lose its once immediate practical functions. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also saw the growth of the university "gentleman," the antiquarian, the university "grand tourist"—effete and decadent products of ages of wealth and of wealthy classes for whom learning was a decoration. John Cleland's Memoirs of an Oxford Scholar suggest that liberal higher education for the eighteenth century gentleman could smell more of the boudoir than the study and could be largely divorced from any sense of career, vocation, or life's work; and Kenneth Charlton remarks how the "grand tour" lost the practical functions that earlier periods had attributed to it:

Whereas the chief purpose of the Grand Tour [in the eighteenth century] was cultural, this was not the case in its nascent years in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Then the aim was strictly "useful" and "practical": to gain practical experience of other countries, of foreign people, of their languages, and of the terrain and resources of these countries, all of which would be useful in a future diplomatic or political career (Charlton 1965, pp. 215-216).

At the same time as the Latin language was ceasing to be the vernacular for ecclesiastical, diplomatic, legal, and learned discussion, Latinists began to argue for Latin as "a mental discipline" independent of civic usefulness: when the trivium-quadrivium learning of the old schools lost its clear civic functions, it too became "useful as a discipline." Thus, even Charles W. Eliot, in his article, "What is a Liberal Education" (1884), could, looking backward, argue that the "mental discipline" developed by a study of Euclid and Archimedes could in no way be replaced by modern "analytic mathematics" (i.e., algebra, analytical geometry, calculus, quaternion), which might be more practical but less useful for mental training (Eliot 1972, pp. 25-26).

Simultaneous with the eighteenth and early nineteenth century development of a range of conceptions of education divorced from vocation and from life purpose come the gradual dissolution of the old world of villages, small group organizations, guilds, and corporations described in Jan Van den Berg's Changing Nature of Man, a
world that did not change radically in rural areas between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries (Van den Berg, Ch. II and III). The new world was a world of mobile populations in Europe, Africa, Asia, and America, and between them, of routinized and alienated work, of massive alienating industry, and equally massive and alienating neighborhoods. It was a world that had seemingly set aside the old communal myths, civic and ecclesiastical, which had claimed a divine sanction, a world seeking a secular order inspired by the muses of Reason and Experience. It was a world where individualistic "careers" were possible—with all the good and bad that that implies (Laslett, *passim*).

The nineteenth century is the watershed. To move from the world of Fielding and Austin to the world of Dickens is to move to a world where education and liberal education have different purposes in relation both to job and life purpose. The old vocation-oriented "liberal arts" of the *ancien régime* had lost both their idiom and functions. The French Revolution required that the educated dilettantism of the old master classes, if it was to survive, become a deeper thing and be given serious justifications. Clearly the torch had passed from the university to those centers outside the university where science in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had had its primary development and from the petty school to the trade schools, whose factories prepared young men and women for the more skilled manual enterprises. Whereas the French Revolution had created the theory of a public schooling which is free, universal, compulsory, and utilitarian—yet allowing full scope for the development of "human understanding without any need of supernatural revelation" (Barnard 1969, pp. 212-213; Gagnon 1975-76, pp. 36-40), its great destructive work was to uproot the Latin-based institutions of the old order and their conception of human learning; its great real-life achievement was to establish the centers of pragmatic study called "institutes."

In the English speaking world, no French Revolution and no Napoleon altered the basic structure of institutions; but the old vocational order and also the old aristocratic order were as surely things of the past—in impulse if not in behavior. Bentham's education papers and his University College are the dividing place in England, betokening the rise of utilitarianism in education (Leavis 1950). The new order was either to be a higher dilettantism, a defending of university study as everywhere concerned with mental discipline as separated from contingencies, or it was to be an order that made university "liberal studies" servants of industry, or a new
scientific vocation, and of the new applied policy-studies such as economics.

Newman and Mill spoke for the first conception. Newman could both point out that eighteenth and early nineteenth century scientific advances had not been made in the "liberal arts" universities but also argue for a university centered in liberal education, defined as "knowledge which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be informed by any end, or absorbed into any art" (Newman 1976, pp. 101, 142, 144, 148, 154-55). Mill, who was at the other end of the political spectrum from Newman, argued, in his inaugural address as Rector of St. Andrews, for a university that did not "fit men for some special mode of gaining a livelihood," making them "skilled lawyers and physicians or engineers," but "rather capable and cultured human beings" (Mill 1969). On the other hand, T. H. Huxley, who had a position similar to Mill's at Aberdeen University, emphasized the importance of contingent learning cultivation and placed education at the heart of the scientific, industrial, and community-building enterprise (Huxley 1969).

One can observe the dialectic between the utilitarians and the purists England metaphorically represented in the tension between Dickens' Gradgrind (the utilitarian educator portrayed in Hard Times) and his Sleary, of Sleary Circus, also an educator, working with the pure materials of the imagination. The dispute also gave rise to Hastings Rashdall's great nineteenth-century history of the medieval university, which drastically undercut the purist position by pointing out "that what Victorians understood by culture was unappreciated by the medieval intellect and that the medieval universities were eventually concerned with professional training for life's work" (Sanderson 1850).

In America, the same issues were joined between the Jeremiah Day types, on the one hand, and the George E. Howard types, the proponents of the Morrill Act and the Drexel Institute, on the other. Howard, in 1881, is very clear about what the state university and the state school are for:

The common school as a political institution is already thoroughly affiliated with other members of the social body. It no longer sustains merely a relation to the social organism; it has become a part of it. It is a township miniature, whose meeting votes taxes and makes by-laws as naturally as do the town meeting itself . . .

The secularization of higher education has been a matter of much slow growth, and the causes are not far to seek. In method, organism, and sometimes in spirit, the foundations of the colonial era were reproduction
of Cambridge or Oxford colleges. The principal defects of the English system were perpetuated. The English universities were modeled directly upon the University of Paris, and therefore were dominated by monastary traditions. They were state institutions placed in subordination to a church establishment. Most of the early American colleges were intended practically to be the same. In fact, if not always in theory, they represented the union of church and state. They were created primarily to provide a learning ministry, and next for the general public good. Divinity, mathematics, and the dead languages—the principal elements of the traditional "classical" course, until a few years since the only honorable part of our curriculum were the chief subject of study . . .

A second and more important step was taken in 1862. By the Morrill Act of that year, one of the noblest monuments of American statesmanship, every State is given thirty thousand acres of land "in place," or its equivalent in "scrip," for each of its Senators and Representatives in Congress, for the purpose of endowing at least one college, where the leading object shall be, "without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts . . . in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life." Here the central thought is utility, to do something for society which the existing colleges are not doing. In his own words, the fundamental idea of Senator Morrill was to assist "those much needing higher education for the world's business."

One important element of a real university is inherent in the very nature of a university supported by the State; she must, when fully developed, aim at the universitas of knowledge; for her curriculum must satisfy the demands of a complex and progressive society, whose creature she is. First of all, a helping hand must be extended in the industries. The natural and physical sciences hold, and must continue to hold, a very high place in the academic life. Costly laboratories filled with expensive appliances are rapidly appearing. These challenge public appreciation, and money therefore is freely supplied. Nor are studies sometimes regarded as less practical neglected. Classical and modern philology have found a congenial home in the West. Sanskrit has gained zealous votaries beyond the Missouri. There, also, a laboratory of psycho-physics has just been erected by a disciple of Wundt. Colleges of medicine and law are likewise coming in response to popular demand. For in few things is the State more deeply concerned than in the growth of medical science; and in an age of social revolution, when every part of our legal and constitutional system is being probed to the bottom, when legislation is resorted to more and more as a heal-all for every public ill, real or imaginary, the State surely has urgent need of an educated bar as a safeguard to herself.

But in no way does the state university discharge her public trust more faithfully than in the study of those questions which directly concern the life and structure of our social organization. Administration, finance, constitutional history, constitutional law, comparative politics, railroad problems, corporations, forestry, charities, statistics, political economy—a crowd of topics, many of which, a few years ago, were unheard of in the schools, are being subjected to scientific treatment. Unless I greatly misapprehend the nature of the crisis which our nation has reached, it is in the absolute necessity of providing the means of instruction in these branches that we may find a very strong, if not unanswerable, argument in favor of the public support of higher education. Henceforth the State must concern herself with the economics of government and with the pathology of the social organism. The fact is that in the sciences of administration, munici-
pal, state, or central, we are as a nation notoriously ignorant. Beguiled by the abundance of our resources, we have allowed ourselves to become awkward and wasteful in nearly every department. But the growth of discontent and misery of the people admonish us that the time for reform has come. Hereafter taxation and finance, the tariff and corporations, labor and capital, social evils and the civil service, must absorb the attention of statesmen. Now, all these things are precisely the problems which can be solved successfully only by specialists. Surely the outlook is full of promise. I do not believe that in the end the ideal of culture will be lowered by a too fierce utilitarianism. True, a new standard of culture may be established, one which shall adjust itself from generation to generation, according to the conceptions of an advancing civilization; and a new definition of culture may be constructed, one which shall embrace the industries and the mechanic arts (Howard 1972, pp. 125-137).

The new university is to be secular, the servant of industry and the state. It is to prepare people for the vocations and professions. It is to lead in the democratization of society and the production of affluence. It is to be liberal in its concern to provide people with theoretical and scientific perspectives for handling day-to-day industrial activities and secular in its formation of human values—drawing its inspiration from no single sectarian form. The new university is to be large, Germanic, and specialized. Howard's view has prevailed in America. One would wager that well over 50 percent of America's youth who enter higher education attend institutions like those that Howard envisaged. Even today proposals for an urban grant university system fusing broadly theoretical studies, uncontaminated by a compensatory stance, with efforts to achieve an urban restructuring comparable to that achieved in the rural areas, receive support (Reisman 1975, pp. 149-156; Bernstein 1974).

Howard's 1881 view of what the universities and common schools were to become and subsequent similar proposals made sense to those who ruled American education as long as there was widespread belief:

• That what industry and government were doing for America was benign, a not uncommon assumption during the period "when the West was won."

• That the university as a secular institution served a variety of communities which did have roots, assisting all in a neutral, symmetrical way.

• That the life purposes of people were formed by their own religious communities or by some common consensus-based sense of rational morality—in Howard's vision a morality free of class spirit, filled with a sense of social duty, honest, truthful, manly, sincere, conscientious, and concerned to try all things at the bar of "teaching by investigation."

These beliefs are no longer so widespread as they once were.
General education, as we know it, did not come originally from the new technical schools or the Morrill Act-style universities, though some critics have seen it as arising to compete with those schools. Ultimately the growth of specialized knowledge, the concomitant rapid and continuing transformation of society, the emergence of a free labor market, and the appearance of an adulthood too complex for youth to understand and too dangerous for them to experience, put great stress on the educational system in the Western world. The free labor market did end the guild educational system and replaced it with various industrial, scientific, technological and on-the-job training institutes. The growth of knowledge and the accompanying rapid transformation of society led to new arrangements in the liberal arts curriculum—these being the subject matter major, the elective course, and the group requirement: the subject matter major, on the basis of the notion that knowledge now required new sorts of specialization; the elective on the basis of the notion that the total liberal arts curriculum needed to be expanded and taken out from under the classics to accommodate the moderns; and the “group requirements” on the basis of the notion growing out of the liberal art tradition, that the educated man knew many things about many areas. But this change came about gradually and at first in the “pure liberal arts” institutions, such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, as a consequence of a century-long dialogue between “ancients” or “classicists” and “moderns” or “modern science” and “modern language” people, all of whom may have been looking over their shoulders at the new vocationalism.

Early nineteenth century prescriptive classicists in America generally held to the notion of a prescribed classical education as the foundation for education on the grounds that good mental habits were formed by it: the faculties developed by right exercise of the mind in classical grammars and such subjects as geometry, and model character learned from the study of ancient heroes. Hence, the sciences and modern foreign languages were either to be proscribed or kept off to the side in the ideal liberal arts curriculum. The classic “liberal arts” or “general education” formulation of this sort from early nineteenth century America was developed by President Jeremiah Day and a faculty committee at Yale that in 1828 decided not
to make the foreign languages elective. The committee wrote as follows:

The great object of a collegiate education, preparatory to the study of a profession . . . is to give that expansion and balance of the mental powers, those liberal and comprehensive views, and those fine proportions of character, which are not to be found in him whose ideas are always confined to one particular channel (Hawkins 1972, pp. 80-81).

Notice that "general studies" are still only preparatory to a profession, and still the prerogative of gentlemen. This prescriptive view of general education as a medieval-style classical education based in faculty psychology, transfer-of-learning "mental discipline" justifications, and a strong ethical bias continued its hold on American higher education until the 1870's, when Charles W. Eliot picked up on the tentative moves that had been made toward an elective system and evangelized intensely for this sort of general education as a program. The remnants of pre-Eliot views are with us even today (Bok 1974, Ch. III, pp. 159-172).

Eliot's motives for adopting the elective system were varied: as an administrator with advanced views, he wanted to make a place in mainstream teaching at Harvard for the sciences and modern foreign languages and literatures. As an entrepreneur for Harvard, he appears to have wanted to compete with the vocationalists. As an administrator having students and alumni for a constituency, he wanted to make Harvard teaching more lively and learning more interesting, and he thought that instituting market mechanisms for faculty and students would make both changes happen: "The thinking processes must spring from within . . . The pupil's own will must be brought into play; he must see in the process something of interest" (Hawkins, pp. 80-81). Though Eliot did not refer to Adam Smith in his justifications for the elective system, he did refer to two other political changes as productive of the system he envisaged: the Protestant Reformation, and the Enlightenment movement toward political liberty. In Eliot, the search for "what is to be known," like the search for a vocation in Luther, is entirely an individual—not a communal matter. Though beginning English, chemistry, physics, and beginning French or German continued to be required at Harvard, at first, the ideal was complete student freedom to choose courses. No group requirements, no majors, no advising. Eliot looked aside to the growing land-grant and technical college movement and admitted that the group requirements and prescribed courses had some function in a trade school or technical school, where a fixed body of craft was to be mastered; but
education undertaken purely for intellectual discipline was to be "free" even as Newman and Mill had said it should be. The coherence of the elective system was to be gained not from any group requirement or prescribed courses but from the student's sense of the coherence of his own thinking and the coherence of the disciplines he encountered. Its breadth would reflect the interest of the student in breadth rather than the foolish notion that the student could or should know everything. Indeed, in view of the advancement of learning, Eliot held that it was impossible that the student could acquire "more than an insignificant fraction of the great sum of acquired knowledge" and the "classical core" had behind it no authoritative consensus. Moreover, as he saw it, the depth of "mental discipline" that the student was to acquire would come out of the student's concentrating on studies that excited him and in which he could hence achieve depth, not from "transfer of learning," which Thorndike was to disprove in any case (Hawkins, passim).

Though the elective system took hold outside of Harvard as a device to move the University out from under the hegemony of the classical studies, it took a curious turn. The exigencies of distributing students among courses and areas led to "group requirements," so that undergraduate students were required to take courses in science, social sciences, humanities, languages, etc., ostensibly as an effort to preserve some of the old notion of breadth ("expansion and balance of mental powers"), a system developed at Cornell but actually used to distribute students among the departments elsewhere. Soon thereafter (1881-91) came the development of the departmental structure and major and of systems of accountancy, such as the course load and credit hour, which were efforts to rationalize the workload of the teacher in undergraduate education and to relate the workload to external considerations, such as the pension fund or transfer of credit (Freeman, February 1974, pp. 81-97; Dressel 1963).

The new organization appears to have served largely the convenience of the university or college in distributing students among departments. Eventually, as departments developed into graduate departments, the required courses preparing major students for graduate school were also used to provide "general education," and general education came to be a way of preparing for and subsidizing graduate education. Gone was the classical notion of general education or liberal education as "practical," as Swift conceived it; gone also was the notion of it as preparatory to the professional, as Day conceived it (mental discipline, liberalness, character); and gone, finally, was the Harvard faith that the free student could make his
own general education in a “market liberal arts college” and achieve breadth, depth, and individuality on the basis of his own unique interest in structured knowledge. What remained was a prescriptive-elective advising system and the departmental major.

It was this system that called forth the cries, on the one hand, of Veblen (Veblen 1918), that the university was too oriented to business structures and, on the other, of Hutchins (Hutchins 1936), that it avoided the serious business of giving definition to education and attending to the great ideas that are worth teaching. The system was open to criticism because it was based on a series of compromises that denied all original positions as having meaning. A number of alternative suggestions such as Hutchins' plan, Minnesota's General College, MSU's University College, were made but not generally received, and students of American education tended to continue to cry out that American education split apart too drastically the liberal and the vocational and also the major disciplines or fields (Dressel 1963, Ch. I, II; Balkcum 1975).

Thus, while American higher education at its advanced reaches was showing that it could be “practical”—perhaps all to practical—in its introductory courses, it had nullified both its “practical” and “pure” justifications. The last pre-1970's effort to rethink the purposes of general education was The Harvard Redbook (Harvard Committee 1946), which asked that general education educate persons capable of being leaders competent to resist authoritarianism by concentrating on developing students who could think rather than memorize and who had some skill in understanding the structure of disciplines rather than their facts. The Report was not widely heard, and increasingly students were wondering what general education was for: whether it was in some sense a preparation for a job, a character, a life of mind, or what?
Beyond Vocationalism:
Education and Life Meaning

The late 1960's and early 1970's student revolt caused the debate about what general education and education for a job should be to jump from the back page of concern to the front page. To the student cry for relevance was added the more conservative notion of education for a career—partly as an antidote to what career education advocates saw as the deleterious effects of inappropriate general education. At its worst, career education merely meant training for a job, which was to be the essence of American education. At its best, it meant something like exploring through work, field work, and the "quest for identity" what one wishes one's total life to be; in other words, to explore how one wishes to enter the community and serve others. In the clash between career education and general education advocates several historic currents combined to reach the late 1960's and early 1970's headlines.

On the one hand, education change agents tended to treat conventional college "general education" as, in the jargon of the period, irrelevant (by which they meant that it did not appear usefully to prepare young people for analyzing or acting on pressing social issues such as racism, poverty, and improper social priorities). Action projects, whether sponsored by educational institutions or outside them, seemed better equipped to do that. Ironically, the "right wing" in the period tended to regard conventional general education as much too relevant, in the sense that it stimulated a critical stance toward dominant values putatively as American as apple pie; the notion received confirmation when a number of studies demonstrated, or appeared to demonstrate, that the professors who taught the general education students and students who comprised the bulk of their hearers, that is Arts and Science College students and professors, held to attitudes presumed to be "to the left" of those held by professional college faculty or students.

In contrast, "career education" was widely perceived by its opponents in its early stages as advocating bridging the gap between school and society by teaching youth to like the status quo and so give up the facility for criticizing it, which had traditionally been held to be essential in "general education." Career education's advocates said that what it meant to bring to education was not conformity and not acquiescence in rotten work, but the development of
a sense of work and "life's work" that would give "purpose" and "meaning" to youth (Marland 1974, pp. 5-12). What they sought was not an education that insisted, like the camp commander in the Bridge On the River Kwai, that every slave "be happy in his work." Rather they wanted an education in which the search for relevance would be answered if students could learn to look at work and all other experiences in the community as a "learning laboratory" that, taken with theoretical studies, would allow the person to construct meaning for his or her life (Bell 1975, pp. 2-5, 20-21). The appearance of research that suggested college as constructed neither enhanced job skills nor, apart from credential monopolies, necessarily enhanced productivity or earning or earning power (Bird 1975, pp. 32-37; Bird 1975, pp. 77-105; Berg 1970; Kurlander 1974, pp. 33-36) strengthened the voices at the extremes of the dialogue: career educators asserting that the studies showed college was not doing what it should in preparing people for life; strict education-for-education people arguing that the studies showed higher education ill-fitted to take on a topic outside the domain of education anyway.

The appearances in universities of large numbers of nontraditional students led to a questioning in the late 1960's of the ethnocentricity and deadness of the received, required or recommended courses that made up general education in the social sciences and the humanities. Why German and French rather than Swahili? Why Eugene O'Neill and not Wole Soyinka? The new students also wondered why education did not give them a job when it had seemed to be the path to a job for their WASP male predecessors (Whittington 1975). Some found general education unnecessarily difficult. The new pressures and changes in the general education curriculum were in some quarters seen as an abandonment of the traditional "quality" and "discipline" that had characterized higher education's general education (Craig 1974, pp. 143-147; Else 1974, pp. 138-142; Peterson 1973, pp. 45-50; Park 1976, pp. 41-44; Knight et al., 1975, pp. 6-9, 21); and career education responded for traditionalists with the notion of an education that would not only solve social problems but be firmly rooted in the Western tradition—and grow out of educational values developed during the dawn of Lutheranism and Calvinism with their work ethic, firm moral discipline, respect for obedience, and, in Calvinism's case, respect for capitalism (Rockler 1975, pp. 43-46; Weber 1958). Neither the advocates of general education nor those of career education really thought through what it would be like to create general and career education that was culture-specific and avoided the problems of ethnocentrism and alienation simultaneously. Some of the
most serious wrestling with respect to capitalism and general-versus-
career education appears to have taken place at the nation's com-
munity colleges, particularly those located in non-mainstream cultural
contexts, where new forms of general studies were growing up and
culture-based economic development was going ahead simultaneously

The early 1970's collapse of the job market and the mounting evi-
dence that college made little difference to earning-power led to a
questioning of the notion that a general college education, irrespec-
tive of its character, would prepare one for a job. Liberal education
particularly came in for criticism from employers, the general public,
and some students, and the defenders of liberal or general education
endeavored to show that it had been and could be related to the
market world (Olson 1975; Jacobus 1973). Career education would
put people back to work, prepare them for useful work, and help
the underemployed. In response, the proponents of general educa-
tion argued that relating to the "job market" in a rapidly changing
and highly complex society required neither knowledge of jobs nor
a career conception so much as an analytic capacity and a knowledge
of what the best minds of the past have thought (Magrath 1974, pp.
24-29).

The position is well expressed by William A. Darkey, the Dean of
St. John's College in Santa Fe, a college dedicated to the continuation
of the purist or prescriptivist tradition as described earlier in this
paper. Dean Darkey writes of his college:

We have sought since 1937 to re-establish the notion of liberal education
as a unified set of disciplines that are central to our tradition. The effort
was a response to criticism of the trends of the educational establishment
in the 20's and 30's. In our view, the situation has not improved in the
three-and-one-half decades. I would question, very fundamentally, the as-
sumption that the liberal arts disciplines should be put to use for useful
policy purposes. The pursuit of liberal discipline in the traditional sense,
ipso facto, precludes their being put to use for useful policy purposes.
It is not that such studies might not turn out to be socially useful—well-
educated free minds, we believe, will always be beneficial to society. How-
ever, when a teacher tries ahead of time to determine those uses and to
train students for those purposes, one is already on the basis of his own
presumed right opinions of what will, in fact, be useful, restricted the
freedom with which the studies are to be pursued. Hence, the studies
are no longer free, that is, no longer liberal. It is our conviction that the
minds of students should be free so that they may act as seems best to
them in light of future personal and social developments. Technical edu-
cation is not what we are after, so we can drop that. That in itself is a
great gain and one not often squarely faced or generally conceded. But
to ask that the liberal disciplines be put to useful policy purposes has
political and sociological overtones. It implies that we, as educators, know
with some degree of concreteness what the future will bring and therefore, what sort of preparation ought to be given so as to make the student ready for serious problems. It seems to me that all future guessing is essentially unreliable witchcraft that liberal education has no business dabbling in. So far as I can see, historical experience as well as metaphysical considerations support me in this. The current support for the opposing position is based on the relevance of futurology. It seems to us at St. John's that the best liberal education could do is to concentrate on what are the fundamental skills of reasoning and on issues that are proved to be perennial. We can only, after all, teach what we know—not what we think probable in the future. Persons who know how to think about the new experiences that their lives present to them with a sophisticated awareness of what men have thought will be able, as well as possible, to confront their futures. In this sense, their education will be useful. They will be prepared to continue their education. But if education is regarded as a process of getting ready for a predicted future which begins at graduation, then, in my view, education has not happened. It may be that such education looks in retrospect like high-class vocational education for bureaucrats, and yet, that is a harsh judgment to make of the free and innovative minds that have shaped our world and our minds. The point of liberal education must be really to free the mind. That is why I am worried about the implication of policy which suggests binding the mind with hypothetical and imperfectly perceived futures. I don't know how much liberal education can actually accomplish; what education accomplishes is rather dark at best, but it seems to be that the direction of the effort can be clear. I certainly believe that such knowledge as one possess should inform action. Indeed it cannot help doing so. But that, I think, must be left to the individual. At best, I think that this is the way St. John's relates to its students (Darkey 1973, p. 13; Mounce, 1975).

Darkey's position is at least clear. Some educators who took positions not very different from his, yet wanting the best of both worlds, said that career education was general education and vice versa without specifying very clearly what either was to do for the student or society (de Brag 1975).

The early 1970's made evident a massive anomie among students. In response, both career education and general education, particularly those forms manifest at cluster colleges and open-learning institutes, claimed to be building a "community" among students and between students and society, with both laying claim to a potential for delivering students from alienated education and alienated work by emphasizing participatory modes of planning and work (O'Toole 1973, pp. 141-145; Coleman 1974; Hawkins 1973; Tubbs 1972). While the general education people tended to say the future is unknowable and education can only give people analytic skills and a sense of the meaning of the past, the proponents of career education tended to say the future is knowable in some degree, and people are likely both to work and to learn better, and find a purpose for their lives more
easily, if they see both learning and work as creating and anticipating a future.

While the advocates of career education, such as O'Toole and Coleman, were arguing for combining education and work with a search for purpose and community, scholars outside the U.S. were looking to general education based on the traditional American model to accomplish precisely what career education said it would do—develop the search for purpose. For instance, Joseph Ben-David seemed to think of American general education and its "collegiate culture" as having solved all of the problems that career education of a liberal ilk might be designed to handle:

The most difficult problem [in American general education] has been presented by the students who come to college in order to mature or to "find themselves." Both of these aims have an intellectual and a moral aspect. Even if no explicitly moral problems were involved in such education, and the college had only to choose for such students a meaningful combination of courses, the choice itself would involve value judgments of a kind that do not exist in setting program requirements for students who know what they are studying for, or for those who do not yet have, but who expect to have, a specific intellectual and vocational purpose after finding out at college what best suits their abilities and opportunities.

American colleges have handled this problem of education for a general purpose in different ways. Many of them experimented at different times with integrated curricula that reflected the intellectual and moral values of those who constructed the curricula. The effectiveness of these attempts varied a great deal depending on the quality of students and teachers and their acceptance of the values on which the given curriculum was based. Because of these variables, none of these attempts (the best known of which were made at Columbia University during the First World War, at the University of Chicago in the 1930s, and at Harvard University in the 1940s) lasted, and none of them became generally or even widely accepted.

The colleges were successful in keeping together and educating this diverse and increasingly large body of students because of two conditions. One was that colleges, existing in large variety, cater to different needs, and good testing, counseling, and information services helped find for the majority of students the kind of college from which they could benefit. The other condition was the existence of an informal collegiate culture. This culture consisted of fraternities, clubs, and teams engaged in sports, debates, theater, journalism, and a great many other things. Membership in these groups often evoked great loyalty to and friendship within the group, great devotion to the purposes of the group, and intense competitiveness toward other groups. Achievement in these various group activities, such as sports, and in pursuit of the universal interests of youth, such as dating, counted in this culture more than scholarship. The values implicit in this culture were consistent with the beliefs and purposes of American society. Participation in these group activities was a good preparation for the combination of ruthless competitiveness and personal loyalty to one's team of coworkers that was so important in business. It also introduced young people effectively to the universalistic values of the non-kinship society of their peers, another important initiation for life in
a socially and spatially mobile society in which one's team of coworkers changes from time to time. At the same time, the atmosphere was, so to speak, educational, since the activities did not carry over to adult life. They were, to some extent, also supervised by adults, and the sponsorship of these activities by the alumni established a bond between youth and adults. In this sheltered freedom of collegiate culture, young men and women could learn to know themselves. The activities were interesting and challenging. At the same time, they took place in a controlled environment and were regarded as play, so that one could go far in experimenting without running the risk of incurring lifelong liabilities. All this still did not amount to creating a firm purpose for the students in their studies. But it helped them, as it was so often said, "to find themselves."

Although it was crude and often corrupt, there were elements in this collegiate culture that represented some of the native values of the country. In the better colleges it helped students to learn that the rough and tumble of competitive life for which they prepared could be made consistent with democracy, altruism, and generosity.

In this manner college experience lent a broader moral meaning to the vocation of business, the way of life that many college students looked forward to. Having thus been helped by the college to establish an identity, students could also appreciate the intellectual and aesthetic purposes of the college. Their loyalty to the college, aroused perhaps by the non-intellectual aspects of college life, could make them appreciative and even receptive to science, scholarship, and art (Ben-David 1977, pp. 86-87).

This seems an oversimplified solution to the problem to say the least. Ben David does admit that the collegiate culture was never effectively integrated with academic studies; but he appears to be utterly blind to the extent to which the collegiate culture of the 1950's, shot through as it was with elitism, racism, sexism, and plain influence peddling and oppression of the worst sort, was not consonant with "the beliefs and purposes of American society" (unless it be held that such practices are what American society is about and that the republic is held together by its vices). Yet, he seems to argue that the resurrection of the old general education and collegiate culture is all that is necessary to the solution of the problem of anomie—perhaps combined with a bit of American ingenuity (Ben-David 1977, pp. 71-93).

In a world where both education and work seemed to be falling apart, both the advocates of career education and of a revitalized general education seem commonly to have claimed that what they were doing was "improving society" (though on different terms), "relating people to their tradition" (again on different terms), preparing people for the future in the best way possible, and creating community. What is wrong with this literature as literature is that it is too often simply advocacy. It has no research base and does not aspire to have one; it generally reflects little sense of history and little knowledge of societies other than our own.
Career education has not yet clearly shown that it can give people's lives a sense of meaning and career, and liberal education and general education provide little evidence that they importantly "make people free" or significantly prepare them for any possible future (Heath 1976, pp. 173-190). That is why, in the main, the literatures of career education and general education are not very exciting as "literature." They seem to be mainly designed to develop a government program, or oppose it, to point a moral or adorn a tale. Career education as a part of higher education has few embodied exemplars that are not simply vocational higher education revisited, and general education in most institutions has no definition and functions other than to act as a student-distributing tool. In short, both concepts in most places are substantives without substance and the research of a substantive sort cannot deal with such fuzzy concepts.

However, some published literature, most of it not directly connected to career education and general education, does bear on the questions I take to be crucial to the dispute: What is general education for at its best? How is career education or something like it possible in an anomic age, and is it necessary or useful? and How can both forms be related and rendered maximally productive for American society? Or should we choose one or the other?

First, we have pretty good evidence that students are more apt to find a job to their liking and some meaning or purpose for their lives if they have accurate information about the job world, some experience of it, honest talk about it, and the opportunity to put together a program of education or training on the basis of the information. We also have a good deal of evidence that this sort of information is not getting to students and that they are often forming no part of their education on the basis of it (O'Toole 1975; Wirtz 1975; Radcliff 1974; Kuskraa 1976). That this process has much to do with a general education that claims to give students a picture of present reality so that they can act on their perceptions is also clear.

Second, we do have pretty good evidence that general education does create some qualities that move people toward finding usefulness and meaning in society. It tends to move students from positions of "absolutism" to "relativism" to "perspectivalist" positions, where they take thoughtful positions of their own and yet have a capacity to see how other positions are tenable (Dressel 1968; Trent and Medsker 1968; Feldman and Newcomb 1969; Perry 1970; Kohlberg 1969; Sanford 1962). They develop what Keats calls "negative capability," or empathy, a capacity for the "imaginative suspension of disbelief" in looking at other people's cases. This development of em-
pathy appears also to be crucial to the development of many careers if the research of Pottinger, McClelland, and others is to be believed (Pottinger 1976, pp. 62-63, 54-60). What appears to be needed in this area now is an analysis of the degree to which empathetic developments in general education are of the sort needed in a range of careers. We need other survey literature that shows what else "general education" does or does not do in relation to job, careers, and life purposes, however generally.

Third, one of the most serious documents in the career education literature, that by James Coleman and others, entitled Youth: Transition to Adulthood, traces out a history of the breakdown of the links between education and society somewhat analogous to that traced in this paper but concentrating on the U.S. in the last century. Coleman and his group see American society as having become "information rich and responsibility poor" for most children and youths, the opposite of the situation in most of America around 1900. The authors trace how the mass media and publications have grown to bombard young people with information while the fundamental channels of socialization have been neglected or destroyed: the extended family, the intergenerational social group, the open work space, the village and farm where work or other responsibility and learning were easily integrated. Though Coleman's group recommendations as to how the situation can be turned around are not directed to higher education's "general education" components specifically, they parallel and give justification for what is happening in higher education's "general education" cluster college or experiential communities. Coleman's recommendations for putting responsibility back into the lives of young people include: an emphasis on action learning in social service, internships, business experience; increasing emphasis on mixing education and work across a lifetime; mixing generational groups in and out of school so as to break up the age-grade education lockstep; college and high school education-work-living programs for the same reason; and the use of alternative learning modes everywhere. These recommendations are precisely the recommendations being carried out in many of the cluster colleges of the country (Gaff 1970, pp. 3-64, 105-136, 216-238). The study further recommends that education obtain much more community-building skills and that the emphasis be on smallness, openness and flexibility, again on the agenda of the cluster colleges and experiential learning units. Actually these kinds of learning communities have come into being as a section of general education and for the reason that Coleman elicits (Stephenson and Sexton 1975, pp. 177-197).
However, though Coleman's negative analysis is useful, what is not clear is whether the reintegration of society through the educational group Coleman envisages is possible. The widespread development of such an institution as the cluster college or alternative educational institution may not change things much without other major social adjustments to assure us that society outside the educational institution is less mobile, more democratic and open in its workspaces, and more accessible to the notion of youth's bearing responsibility (Grazia 1948). The possibility of cluster colleges serving integrational functions, which Coleman foresees, is likely to be limited by their location in large university centers both in cities and in rural areas; students “go away from home” to such colleges now and therefore are not integrated to a rooted community by them.

In any case, Coleman's research and recommendations and the literature on cluster colleges suggest that some serious analysis needs to be done of cluster colleges and experiential-learning, general education programs as models of the integration of career education and general education, school and society, since they have the development of purposeful individuals as their goal.

The research needs to examine whether the institutions meet the following value criteria:

- They must emphasize the critical as well as the acculturational functions of education sufficiently to insure “full participation” to young and adult citizens on grounds other than victimization. In connection with understanding modern business, this would, at the least, mean education in such matters as the nature and structure of modern capitalism; alternative modes of organizing work and workspaces; the nature of the stock market, of modern power structures, of legal rights and constraints on modern labor. They would include education in the relationships between work, education, and play (expressive activity) and in the characteristics of pre-industrial, and industrial and post-industrial societies in each of these areas. They would bring people into a living relationship with the history of labor unions and other agencies designed to secure a participatory voice for labor, including education in such matters as labor law and the expressive culture of the labor movement. They would talk about how licensing and placement processes work. Similar things might be said about the governmental processes.

- Education of this sort would be organized to show that the university and the common schools can respond better—in a more neutral way—to the constituent interest groups to which they relate. They should be able to do this along lines set forth, with respect to testing,
by Justice Douglas in the *De Funis* case and in other areas along lines set forth by a series of court decisions summarized by Lawrence Free­man in his “Some Legal Developments and Their Possible Impact on the Future of Education.”

*The education would be organized to show that the community and education can provide institutions—religious or secular—in which people’s life purposes can be formed or in which the question of life purposes is seriously tested in interaction with a human group with whom the young person identifies and in which he has the right to “maximum employment” and “full participation.” Such groups would make no assumptions, beyond those asserted by the courts, as to the “uniformity of common values in America.” They would admit, for each culture and community, that there are different ways of coming to a sense of citizenship, obligation to the group, and “participation.”*

The research tests would make use of the structures proposed by the Coleman group, and would rigorously examine whether the structures the Coleman group advocates are, in fact, present in experimental higher education, and whether they can accomplish what the study suggests they can. It could also examine whether the dis­sociation of education, work, community-building, and sense of “life purpose” or “career” is so egregious as to be beyond solution by the tools of education and remain to be solved by larger policy changes willed by society at large, such as cutting down on population mobility, and common institutional size, or reorganizing generally the socialization structures presently available to youth. Institutions that might be made the basic pilot subjects of such a study might be those that participated in the Association of American College *Project for Change in Liberal Education*, which had as its goal the development of a liberal education that led to a sense of life purpose, calling, and capacity for building communities. These studies should also establish whether what gets in the way of the conception of a useful career for most people are: (a) educational failures, based on the lack of career education or whether general education of the sort Dean Darkey proposes is enough; (b) labor market failures based on the exclusion of people from the labor market through artificial licensing requirements; or (c) failures in U.S. labor policy that derive from its faith in routinized, capital-intensive ways of “doing jobs” as opposed to nonroutinized, labor-intensive ones (Levitov 1976; White 1977).

Fourth, several studies have suggested that the business world or work world are dissatisfied with college students and vice versa. This mutual dissatisfaction is a source of alienation and contributes to
a lack of career focus (Wirtz 1975, pp. ix-xii). For instance, it has been argued that the students lack the language skills required by business and therefore are not attractive to businessmen. Career education thus has had to develop “business-required” skills in language areas; however, in some cases, “business-required” skills may seem totally artificial from the perspective of modern general education studies in linguistics. Studies have not been done to determine whether what are regarded as “work” or “career” skills are themselves substantive linguistic skills or merely the products of linguistic ignorance and cultural bias in the market community. Once such determinations are made on a broad scale, it will be easier to determine whether career education-general education should be primarily concerned with adult education directed at the “employer” or “market” world or whether it should be youth education directed at students entering those worlds.

Fifth, the present literature shows rather clearly the condition under which nonalienated educational or market “work” is possible: participatory structures, role reversibility, emphasis on small group action learning, nonhierarchial assignment of tasks, and so forth (O’Toole 1973; Coleman 1974). However, the literature does not give any models of teaching either in general education or career education that actually teaches the students how to form such institutions or that shows that students can be taught how to form such institutions. This evidence could perhaps be obtained from other countries. Though former President Ford and other national leaders have spoken of looking to China and other nations, in which a strong sense of responsibility and community are developed in youth, the literature does not appear to include any serious examination of whether the goals of career education or of meaningful general education are realized or fused in other countries. One would think that an examination of recent events in China, Tanzania, and the Scandinavian countries, among others, would be instructive in this regard.
In "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse," Matthew Arnold, a great 'liberal educator' not without concern for the development of "real-world" skills in the youth whom he watched over as inspector of schools, laments his own dilemma as an intellectual wandering between two worlds—"the one dead and the other powerless to be born." The dead world to modern sensibilities is the old world of the Chartreuse with its Carthusian monks and their life of study, work, and prayer; our world, the world that is powerless to be born, grows out of the breakup of the old social structure and religious beliefs, which is brought about by the scientific and industrial revolution, the French Revolution, and its aftermath. At the end of the poem, Arnold, puzzled at his own alienation and anomie, sees a kind of vision of action and pleasure asking him to do something purposeful; but he has been too long a student of the "high, white altar of Truth" unaccompanied by any sense of social direction to act in the present. The poem ends, "Leave our desert to its peace!" Arnold's poem is a cry and little more; in this it is very much like the literature on career education and general education, a cry for the creation of meaningful work and lives—a sermon that this or that reform will create a new era of hope, a sermon offered without much evidence to support the text. What we moderns are asking for may be the reconstitution in our post-industrial culture of some small-group, purposeful "religious" culture, a revival of the "world we have lost" with the dawn of the industrial age—whether our ancestors be Navaho, African, or European.

As long as career education seeks merely some sort of vocational awareness or to vocationalize liberal education, it probably has a limited and realizable goal. In one of its traditions, liberal education has always had a vocational end, and the further vocationalizing of the arts and science colleges seems likely, given the present market. More and better job information will be provided; more and more people will make their educational decisions on the basis of the jobs they seek. Whether the education required by credentialing and licensing will have much to do with the job will be another matter. In some cases, it may and still be destructive. Earl F. Cheit has demonstrated, in a rather profound study, that the process of professionalizing the original liberal arts-professional combinations that
have grown up in America higher education, and which gave rise to
the professional schools, has gone ahead at a rapid, sometimes de­
structing pace. After examining the interesting and sometimes creative
uses to which colleges of Agriculture, Engineering, Forestry, and
Business have put liberal education (Agriculture and Engineering
have become increasingly technical), Cheit comments on the lament
in the literature of professional colleges for the absence of a sense of
local or national community profit, the absence of capacity to think
about policy, “about the service which will be rendered by the tech­
nical skill.” This, in itself, requires in students and faculty a sense of
culture and community and some prospect on how technical tools
can be used to create for a community one or another future con­
sistent with its values:

Most of the major studies and reports of the states of the field, in one
way or another, deal with and lament Whitehead’s key fact, namely that
technical education is all too likely to destroy those energies of mind
needed to direct the skill (Cheit 1975).

Cheit goes on to observe that the Morrill Act mandate, concerning
which Howard wrote so eloquently, is no longer being fulfilled:

As we have seen, that language [i.e. the language of the Morrill Act]
anticipated that they [the land grant schools] would be liberal in the way
they taught the useful. Yet, probably because they were resisted by the
liberal arts, or ignored, or treated simply as a source of students, they
worked to develop their own method of dealing with the liberal arts.
By their own appraisals, none has been highly successful. They have
funds, students, buildings, and reputation, and they perform important
research, but they have not managed a satisfactory accommodation with
their own need for liberal education to deal with the proposition that the
kind of education needed for technical excellence could destroy the energies
of mind needed to direct the skill.

In recent years, the importance of that key fact has grown sharply. The
professional fields are now being drawn increasingly into the process of
social change. We are inclined to regard professional practice as inter­
vention on behalf of a client in an individual case. But the four new
professions studied here are rendering services that draw them increasingly
toward society’s most vital problems: food, forests, recreation, environ­
ment, technology, economic growth, social responsibility, war, and peace.
In short, these four fields play an increasingly vital role in major social
issues (Cheit 1975, p. 143).

In short, the educational machine—well-designed technically—may
well be out of control, destroying “the energies of mind needed to
direct the skill.”

It is not clear that education in the liberal arts colleges can an­
swer this problem, that it can do what the advocates of the new
"career education" and of the new "general education," each hawking their own wares, have said it can and must do—i.e., assist youths to "find themselves," to "create a life's purpose," "to find their way into a human community worth committing oneself and committing themselves to with affection, intelligence, and purpose." The research is not very firm on this second matter, and it is by far the most important question in the new confrontation between career and general education.

Obviously the old distribution requirements, combined with college counselling, do not aspire to accomplish what the critics say is needed, and astute students of higher education doubt that most Arts and Science faculties have the patience or will to try to devise a coherent or several coherent ideologies of general education that can be tried. The research will have to concentrate on what experimental general education and newly formed or funded career education have done while, at the same time, looking outside the university to the possibility that the purposes proposed for career education and the new general education, to help the young to find themselves and find decent communities, are beyond the scope of education. The problem is by no means trivial. What we are asking of education here is what we once asked of religion. John Dewey astutely remarked that "a culture which permits science to destroy traditional values but which distrusts its power to create new ones is a culture which is destroying itself." One might add that a culture that permits the technology that was to be its means for reaching goals (or the owners of that technology) to become the end of its enterprise is also destroying itself. The efforts to create a new career education and a reformed general education in recent years are part of the history of hope. What is needed next is some serious research growing out of the four areas discussed in the chapter on "The Present Debate" to see whether the hope is justified.
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