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TRIUNE

NEWSLETTER FOR SHAPING A NEW FORM OF UNIVERSITY

- The cultivation of a living, imaginative thinking as the fundamental aim in teaching and research – the inseparability of science and art.
- Goethean-style phenomenology as orientation in relation to all faculties; awakening the eye of the spirit.
- The university as the expression and practice of the threefold social life.

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TEACHING IN THE MODERN UNIVERSITY MODEL

Malte Ebach

In the 1898 article below by Rudolf Steiner, he mentions that "[w]e are now living in the time of reformation". Steiner refers to the *Lex Arons*, a 1890 Prussian law introduced into the *Landtag,* which sought to silence political freedoms of the *Privatdozent,* namely, unsalaried causal lecturers, specialised in a topic, who directly charged their students a fee. Steiner's article refers to the plight of these academics within the university model. The casual lecturer today faces the same dilemmas, such as academic freedom, over-specialisation, and the inattentiveness of students. This was all too evident during my time as a senior lecturer.

In short, things have not changed much in universities since Steiner's time. Of course the technology has evolved and universities have become more vocational, replacing training colleges such as schools for nursing, mining and engineering. Yet, the human being has remained the same. The back-biting and ego-driven academic faculty, which is so often satirised, still dominates, as does the tardiness and truancy of students.

What Steiner, and I, refer to is the university model, the foundation that determines what universities are for and dictates the role of the lecturer. A modern university, particularly those in Australia, the US and the UK, see themselves as competitive vocational colleges that raise money in order to grow into corporate behemoths. The people working in them apparently provide the vocational skills that will propel the student into a high salaried career.

The reality, of course, is different. The lecturer is assessed by their research and by their ability to attract private or government funding, postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Ironically, teaching undergraduates, where the university earns its money, is a low priority. Behold the 21st century university model!

The university model naturally influences the teaching model. As a high work-load and low priority activity, not much thought or effort is given to teaching. Much of it is carried out by causal staff, the modern-day *Privatdozents*, who earn little and are constantly overworked. The tenured professors only show up to introductory lectures or field trips, leaving much of the heavy lifting to others. The teaching model itself focuses around the speciality of the lecturer. Like the over-specialised *Privatdozents* that Steiner refers to in 1898, the same casual lecturers teach highly specialised courses in modern universities. I refer to the second and third year courses that students are able to major in for their degrees. A casual lecturer isn't given much paid time to prepare the course. Nowadays, students expect more than just slides. The modern science lecturer gives a performance, with pre-recorded videos featuring film clips explaining processes, or links to various websites, even games students can play. The actual content, such as, facts, theories and the like, are fairly limited. No time is given to discussion - at least not in the STEMs subjects - or to actual discovery.

The teaching model also determines the type of student universities attract. Many of the students in my experience who wish to study marine biology or ecology, want to see and interact with sea-life. Yet, much of their study is focussed on data management and statistics. What nature lover would tolerate years of stats? Many good students I knew simply left, studying philosophy or history instead. Those who remained were simply just good with figures and spreadsheets. Of these, many find themselves heading into a postgraduate degree. By this time, much of the student's mindset is towards vocational success - a mini-academic focussed on research output and funding. Rather than explore new ideas or techniques, these students adhere to what gets you work. I once taught a postgraduate course in which a student only wanted to know which methods and theories would land him a job. That person is now a high-ranking international scientist. Most postgraduate students wouldn't dream of questioning entrenched ideas or methods. "Academic freedom" is as repressed as it was in Steiner's time. The unquestioning and dogmatic are what modern university and teaching models produce, using science to further their careers, rather than using their careers to further the science. The latter unfortunately leave or are left behind.

How can we, as educators, change these calamitous models? Do we change the system or do we start again? I think it would be nigh impossible to change the university and teaching models. I taught my course in biological classification in a phenomenological way using inanimate objects; namely, plastic toys. Teaching students from a variety of backgrounds, such as biology, geography, Earth and environmental science, means there is no common experience, in any one group, of natural objects. To teach classification you can use soils, rocks, minerals, fossils and living organisms. My students came from a variety of backgrounds, so I chose to use objects that students could familiarise themselves with immediately. The plastic toys included farm animals, dinosaurs and sea creatures. The object was simple: pick six toys and create a key based on their features in order to communicate your classification to others. Sounds easy? Think again.

The biology students finished first. I read their keys; many had features such as, "Warm

blooded", "Presence of fur" or "Herbivore". I asked them to show me the fur on the plastic toy. In their mind, they could see actual fur. I asked them again to rethink what they could actually see. One student was so insistent that their plastic toy cow was warm-blooded, that I took a saw to it and cut it in half. I asked where all the organs were. They were perplexed. The students had confused a concept "warm bloodedness" with a real living cow. The biology students took hours before they realised they were looking at plastic toys.

The Earth and environmental science students did much better. The fact that they dealt with the properties of inanimate objects daily meant they immediately saw the plastic toys for what they were: painted polyethylene objects in the shape of animals. One student started to classify the objects based on the hues of red. Another used the sound the object made when it was squashed (it squeaked). They used "prolongations of plastic" for parts that the biology students called "arms" or "legs".

I wondered why there was just a stark difference between both groups of students. One group couldn't actually observe, via *Anschauung*, and confused plastic with the concept of an organism.[*] The other group knew exactly that they were dealing with a non-organic material. I assumed, and still do, that biology is taught in an abstract way, in which organisms are theories which are comprehended via rational argument. Observation, via *Anschauung*, is seen to be too subjective for a highly quantified so-called "objective" science. The more you observe of an organism, it seems, the more subjective the idea of it becomes, as though human perception pollutes the purity of quantifiable science.

Many of these students see less and less of organisms as they progress through their fields. Those students who deal with materials, be it minerals, rocks or soils, are constantly observing them, checking for the lustre and specific gravity of their minerals, the hues of their soils and the texture of their rocks (you can tell the difference between mudstone and siltstone by eating a small piece). Subjects previously thought lost to phenomenology are in fact those that still use human perception to make sense of their natural objects. Even these fields are becoming mechanised and these skills, too, are at risk of disappearing.

The university model, which has been allowed to run rampant over the last 120 years, needs reform. Universities need to see themselves primarily as deep learning institutions. By deep learning, I mean, learning observation (*Anschauung*), critically thinking through ideas, questioning them, coming up with new concepts. Rather than mindlessly assessing students, universities need to nurture students to get them to a new level of understanding. The student who enters such a situation will leave transformed. The university model will also transform the learning model. In my own teaching I used every hour of lectures or tutorials as a practical, where students interacted with objects, discussed them and described them. Lecturing as normally practised is not interacting; rather, it is a one-way stream of information, dictation rather than conversation. Students will also see that learning, in what ever form it takes, is something they want to immerse themselves in, in the same way one would immerse themselves in a hobby or interest. Learning will not be about passing exams, or getting an A-grade, for some future degree.

[*] See: Malte C. Ebach, "*Anschauung* and the Archetype: The Role of Goethe's Delicate Empiricism in Comparative Biology", in *Janus Head,* 8(1), 254-270. Go to: http://janushead.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Ebach.pdf

The new university is small, the classes are small, and the topics are broad. Students will feel a sense of belonging and community. The teachers will not be in competition with another, because they are there to nurture students, not to apply for funding or focus solely on research outputs. Vocational training still has its place - namely, in the colleges and schools that universities are presently attempting to replace. The models I outline above are not new. They hark back to Ancient Greece, outside the walls of Athens in the olive grove where Plato taught Aristotle. Perhaps it is time to find new olive groves and begin the university afresh. ≈

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367397183_Goethe_in_the_Age_of_AI

GIFT CAPITAL AT WORK IN A COLLEGE OF ADULT EDUCATION

Within cultural life, money takes on the nature of a contribution, or *contracted contribution*, a quite different nature and way of working than in the economic sector. Money in the cultural sector of society is not "purchase money", nor does it represent a debt owed as it does in economic life …

… I was for many years involved in a small private college of adult education.[†] The students paid fees which consisted of two parts, one for tuition and the other for room and meals. The part of the fee that was for room and meals was clearly a cost of an economic supply; it was a purchase and was treated as such. But the fee for tuition was something quite different.

Though a small part of this could be seen as a purchase of materials – books, art supplies, etc – the bulk was for paying the salaries of the teachers and support staff. In this, there was clearly no purchase, no exchange of economic values; the salary enabled the teachers to buy what they needed to live. If freed them to teach.

We thought of this part of the fee as a "contracted contribution". Each student contracted to contribute a certain amount towards the running costs of the college, generally the amount set as the fee. The college in its turn contracted to run the course of study the student would have a right to attend. ≈

Excerpted from Michael Spence, *After Capitalism,* Adonis Press, Hillsdale, 2014, pp.127-8.

[†] See M. Spence, *The Story of Emerson College: Its Founding Impulse, Work and Form*, Temple Lodge, 2013.

UNIVERSITY TEACHING AS THE MARRIAGE OF ART AND SCIENCE

Coenraad van Houten

The first connection between the paths of science and art may be found when realising that artists cannot really understand what they have created unless they subsequently investigate their artistic activity in a scientific way. The scientists, too, ought to realise that they cannot possibly embark on their scientific path without the previous intuitive

notion that there is a mystery. This pre-scientific notion, however, is an artistic activity.

In teaching, too, the cognitive process is always preceded by a question, and a subsequent evaluation is required to understand what has been done. In his excellent essay, *Art and Science as Related Concepts*, Yehuda Menuhin has described this relationship as the artistic being female and the scientific being male. This is another indication that it is necessary and fruitful for the two to meet. Completeness only results when the two embark upon a marriage relationship. Art without knowledge and understanding degenerates into arbitrariness; science without art loses touch with life. In a healthy professional schooling this marriage should be allowed to take place, not by putting them side by side, but by a genuine integration. Here, art and science teachers who have been trained in a onesided way often are a problem.

The one who is truly seeking for knowledge strives to discover the idea, the essential, behind all forms of manifestation, and for this purpose has to step over the threshold between the world of phenomena and the spiritual world. True artists want to bring the living idea into manifestation in the sense-perceptible world. To do so they have to cross over the threshold from the spiritual to the sense-perceptible world. They make the invisible visible.

What do adult educators do? To understand what they want to teach, they must be a scientist; to make is visible to others, however, they must be artists. It is a constant movement from the physical world to the idea, and from the spiritual world to the current learning situation. It is not enough for them to know and understand their subject; neither does it suffice that they are able to describe everything in an imaginative way. No, in every learning situation adult educators must be able to celebrate within themselves the marriage of art and science. That is their Schooling Path. That makes it easier to understand why so many excellent artists are bad adult educators, and why so many outstanding scientists are practically unable to impart their knowledge and their skills to others.

In the marriage of these two basic attitudes a third element is required. The marriage needs to be blessed as well! Regarding adult educators, this means a moral element that is connected with renunciation, even a sacrifice, must be born. Their artistic achieve and their research effort may no longer have absolute priority; this has to be replaced by their striving to serve their companion human beings in their learning process. This is an essential, qualitative element, that is not usually included in the profession of teacher. Where this willingness to serve does not exist, adult education should not be taken up as a profession. The three elements: *art*, *science* and *devoted service* to the development of other people, form a new threesome that represents a creator source for the adult educator.≈

From: Coenraad Van Houten, *Awakening the Will: Principles and Processes in Adult Learning*, Adult Learning Network, Forest Row, 1995.

THE LECTURE AS EXULTED SPEECH

Page Smith

The lecture has a quasi-.religious character about it, since exalted speech partakes of the sacred. Every lecture, listened to by dozens or hundred of students, should partake of art (dramatic art being perhaps the closest). The lecturer who read his notes dutifully is

performing an act that the students can do better for themselves. Such an instructor gives up the very element of spontaneity which alone justifies the lecture as a form of teaching. The lecturer must *address* students. He/she is, after all, asking a good deal of them. If there are two hundred students in the class, the lecturer is saying to them, in effect: What I have to say is of such considerable consequence that I feel entitled to take up two hundred precious hours of your collective time in order to explain it to you, or, even better, in order to enlarge your sense of the possibilities of human existence in relation to this topic we are considering together.

> "A university is … an Alma Mater*, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill".
>
> John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (1854)
> 'Knowledge Viewed in Relation to Learning'
>
> *Latin "nourishing mother", used in the motto of the University of Bologna, founded in 1088.

John Legate's Alma Mater for the University of Cambridge, illustrated in 1600. The motto *Hinc lucem et pocula sacra* surrounds the image. *Hinc lucem et pocula sacra* means: "[From] here [we receive] light and sacred draughts, "here" being the University (or the Alma Mater, nourishing mother), and "light and sacred draughts" being metaphors for enlightenment and precious knowledge. From behind the pedestal rises a nude female figure. In her left hand she holds a cup or chalice, receiving drops from a cloud; in her right hand she holds a sun radiated.

"Lectures which aim to sum up an entire subject are in a class by themselves" Karl Jaspers writes (*The Idea of the University*, 1959). "Such lectures should be given only by the most mature professors drawing on the sum total of their life's work … Such lectures belong to what is irreplaceable in tradition. The memory of outstanding scholars lecturing, accompanies one throughout life. The printed lecture, perhaps even taken down word for word, is only a pale residue". The inspired lecture evokes, again in Jaspers's words, "something from the teacher which would remain hidden without it … He allows us to take part in his innermost intellectual being". The great lecture is thus a demonstration of something precious and essential in the life of the spirit and the mind, and the dramatic power that inheres in that unity.

Such lectures link us with the sermons and political addresses that have played central roles in the "great chain of being" that links classes and generations and nations together in the "the unity of spirit." Thus the casual, and perfunctory, the oft-repeated, the read lecture, the *dead* lecture, is a disservice both the students and to the ideal of learning that presumably hold the whole venture together.≈

From: Page Smith, *Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America*, Penguin Books, 1991, pp.212-3.

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND THE TASK OF LECTURES AND SEMINARS

Rudolf Steiner

We are now living in the time of reformation. The "people" want, from the bottom up, to bring about new conditions of governance from above down. Therefore, one should not be surprised when thoughts of reformation emerge from various quarters regarding the most conservative institutions of our public life: the universities. I am not speaking of such superfluous things as the so-called "Lex Arons." It will be a harmless law, if not abused. But what law does not give rise to abuse! If one abuses this law, then it will be harmful; if one does not abuse it, then it is unnecessary. But it is futile constantly to pose the question to the legislative assemblies: "Toward what end?" After all, one also had the wish to do something, to speak about something, and ... to need to reform something.

I would like to speak about something else, which appears to me important because it originates from a man who has experience in the relevant area, and whose occupation it is to generate improvement in one sphere to which he has devoted himself with all his powers. Ernst Bernheim has just published a pamphlet that deals with the theme of *University Education and the Demands of the Present Time*. The author knows how to uncover deeply-seated detrimental tendencies. Detrimental tendencies that are known. For he proceeds from the notion that "today" students skip class more often than was the case in any previous time, and that this, measured by the most modest of standards, is desirable.

And—certainly in contrast to many of his colleagues—the author does not seek for the cause of this in the students themselves, but rather in the peculiarities of university education. He discovers that the lecture courses for the students have become too uninteresting. He finds the reason for this fact in the trend toward specialization in the sciences, which currently necessitates that the lecturers compose their so-called private lectures from narrow areas of study involving the elaboration of infinite details.

> Earlier, such a course would cover, for example, general world history, general history of ancient times, of the Middle Ages, and of more recent times; now hardly anyone undertakes to provide such courses of study; one lectures on the history of the Middle Ages, for example, in particular fragments, such as the history of the migrations of peoples, of the time of the German Caesar, from the *Interregnum* until the Reformation—indeed, in still shorter fragments; in addition, constitutional history, economic history, church and art history are studied in separate colleges.
>
> Now this is very well and good for one who wants to train as a researcher and—to stay with our example—has chosen to take something of the Middle Ages into his field of work; but one who intends to become a teacher and wants to take his state examination in history sees himself so overwhelmed with this kind of lecture course—in which he must get to know antiquity, the modern era, etc., in the same manner—that he does not know which way to turn. At first, he sets out with the confidence of a newcomer—boldly taking on five, six, seven private lectures; but soon his strength does not suffice to be attentive and taking notes for so many hours a day. In the best case, one will be so sensible as to abandon several of the courses completely and limit oneself to the regular attendance

> of only a few—and thereby hold as a top priority the commitment not to allow the task originally taken up to fall into such complete lawlessness that one ultimately ends up disgusted with the whole thing, discouraged and indifferent.

Bernheim raises these conditions in relation to the question of whether it is at all justified to maintain the establishment of private lectures, considering the now sweeping specialization of the sciences. Today, if the teacher intends to bring forward all the details of his area of expertise, then he has to lose himself to such a great extent in *the specific* that he has no time left to offer the great, essential vantage-points according to his personal understanding.

In addition to this is the fact that it is no longer even necessary to provide this sum of details in the lecture courses. For we currently possess compendiums of these details, which are excellent, and whose current level of comprehensiveness would earlier have been inconceivable to us. On the basis of these considerations, Bernheim comes to the conclusion that one should structure the private lectures differently. They should comprise much shorter periods of time. In them, one should renounce the enumeration and critical evaluation of the particular details, and instead set oneself the task of holding *orientation* lectures in which one develops an overall understanding of a certain subject, a general point of view.

By contrast, [the author further proposes that] the practical exercises at the universities, the work in seminars, should see a greater expansion. Such work should not, as is currently the case, begin only in later semesters, but already at the beginning of university studies. Here the students should learn the methods of scientific investigation; here one should concretely train oneself to become a researcher.

I do not fail to see the benefits to be had from a college education established in the sense of these suggestions. In particular, it seems to me very advantageous to reformulate the private lectures in the sense envisioned by the author. For it cannot be denied that much of what is said today at the lectern is actually easier and more convenient to gain from the existing manuals. And most importantly, such a reform will better allow the *personality* of the university professor to emerge into the foreground. And nothing works on people more than precisely the personality. A receptive spirit will be more inspired by a peculiar, even if ever so subjectively coloured perspective, than by a myriad of “objective” facts.

In contrast, I would not so readily agree with Bernheim's proposal concerning the practical exercises. It may be beneficial for the average student if, under the guidance of a professor, he or she were to learn the method of research, down into the details. But one should not always concern oneself with the average person. One could do so if it were true that the gifted spirit breaks through no matter what, even against all fettering hindrances.

But that is not in fact true. The things one does to help the average person hinder the gifted spirit in the unfolding of his individuality. They cause his originality to atrophy. And if the institutional examinations require one to have proof—as is the case for the present writer—of having taken part in a certain number of practical exercises, then for the one who intends to go his own way, such a measure becomes a shackle. The focal point of university education must consist in the personal inspiration brought about through the professor.

Thus we see the value of lectures on general themes that are furthermore delivered from a personally-won point of view. As for the exercises, let those partake in them who have

the need. But at the time of examination, do not ask someone what he has pushed himself through during his time of study, but rather what he is now able to achieve. How he has attained his competence must be a matter of indifference. One can offer practical exercises for those who need them, but one should not make them into an obligation for those who are able to meet the requirements of the examination without them. ≈

Rudolf Steiner, a text published in *Magazin für Literatur*, 30th September 1898, GA 31.

LINKS AND INITIATIVES

This space is reserved for news, relevant links and outlines of initiatives.

Please send any information to be included here.

AUSTRALIA

INDUS UNIVERSITY PROJECT

The Indus Project is a pioneering tertiary educational initiative feasibility-researched for Western Australia. The educational dimension of the campus (the "faculty") is not any kind of corporation or legal association which pays salaries. Tuition is paid for through gift capital. Go to:
https://www.educationforsocialrenewalfoundation

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE NEWLETTER

To help develop an international community of people together striving to shape a new kind of university. **Please share this newsletter widely.**

To share insights and information which will help to develop the content, methods and organisational principles of this kind of university

BACKGROUND – ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

The university, since its inception in the medieval people, has become a central organ of the cultural and spiritual life of society. It has been called a "little city", a melting pot for new ways of thinking and for shaping the world creatively.

All knowledge in the medieval university was unified by faith in a transcendent God. During the time of Renaissance humanism, and later in the early-modern Kantian and Humboldtian universities, the human rational faculty became seen as the unifying power. The university came to be thought of as a centre for universal knowledge. The modern university can better be called a "multi-versity"; faith in God or the rational striving toward the universality of knowledge is not its central concern. It is essentially materialistic in outlook, serving mainly practical ends through its teaching and research.

SHAPING A NEW FORM OF UNIVERSITY

This means stepping toward a future in which the university is completely free of the state –

financially, in terms of course content, and in relation to the awarding of degrees. This freedom is the responsibility and duty of this central organ of the cultural-spiritual sphere of the threefold social organism; it is already recognised in academic freedom. Ways this freedom can be further achieved can be discussed and advanced through this newsletter.

Following the indications of Rudolf Steiner, the aim of lower and higher schooling is not to educate but to awaken – to help awaken the modern human being to the spirit, the spirit working in the human being itself. What can be achieved at the tertiary level will fructify the whole field of education into the future.

Thus we can state boldly: the aim of the new university is to help open the "eye of the spirit" to the working of creative spirit in all forms of nature and the human world. In every faculty, in every aspect of teaching and researching, the task will be to advance human life towards an understanding of the world as a manifestation of spirit.

For this reason the orientation of the new university is fundamentally phenomenological. This is the method which is taught, guided and inspired by what others have perceived in this way. Modern individuals need to learn to see for themselves.

Seeing is grounded in physical perception, in what appears to us in the world (phenomenon literally means – "what appears"). But physical appearance hides what is invisible and essential. When teaching and researching focuses one-sidedly on the physical we have everything technical, the approach which considers what is "real" as only observable, empirical phenomena. Academic thinking then becomes highly materialistic and objective. However, when teaching and learning reaches through what appears to us physically, it rises to the artistic through a "knowing of the heart". In the works of the later Heidegger and the later Merleau-Ponty we have the vision of the invisible within the visible. We find that "more appears than appears to appear".* The appearance hides the innate idea (*eidos*) which may nevertheless come to presence through the pathway of phenomenology; this innate idea Plato equated with *to ekphanestaton* ("what properly shows itself as the most radiant of all is the beautiful").

The new university is focused on a highly practical, applied phenomenology, on all the phenomena which come within the scope of the different faculties. Different minerals and soil forms; plants and animals; the forms and structures of the human body and human consciousness; the different stages in the growth of children, their different soul gestures and temperaments; all the disease and health appearances; social forms and social processes – and so on. For this advanced practical phenomenology, we look mainly to the indications of German philosopher and artist Rudolf Steiner, who in turn drew greatly on the artistic phenomenological natural science of the poet Johann von Goethe.

Editor

* R. Bernasconi, "The Good and the Beautiful" in *Phenomenology in Practice and Theory*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, 1985, pp.179-184.