

# Thomas Jefferson Research Center

Without a moral and spiritual awakening there is no  
hope for us.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

**THE PRICE OF FREEDOM IS RESPONSIBILITY**

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## PEACE THROUGH PERSUASION

by Frank Goble

Since ancient times, wise men have recognized the crucial importance of education in the human struggle for peace and progress. And, in almost every instance, they have recognized ethical instruction as an essential component in the educational process.

Thomas Jefferson said many times, in many ways, that enlightenment was the key to peace and progress. "If the condition of man is to be progressively ameliorated," he wrote, "as we fondly hope and believe, education is to be the chief instrument in affecting it."

Many distinguished scholars have agreed with Jefferson. "Unlike biological inheritance," states Dr. George Beadle, Nobel Prize winning geneticist, "our cultural inheritance begins anew with each generation. In the absence of cultural information put into the brain, none of us would speak or write or sing in any intelligent way, or build even the simplest tool . . . there is almost not inherent limit to the speed with which culture can be lost, improved, or otherwise modified."

The following quotations show the wide acceptance throughout history for the basic social principle that true progress is through education — through persuasion:

*"Men possess a moral nature: but if they are well-fed, warmly clad, and comfortably lodged without at the same time being instructed, they become like unto beasts."*

Confucius

*"If man's education is inadequate or bad, he becomes the most savage of all the products of earth."*

Plato

*"Take great care that the environment of the child is elevating and allow only pure and ennobling examples to be reflected before him."*

Cicero

*"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. Nothing is*

*more important for the public weal than to form and train up youth in wisdom and virtue."*

Benjamin Franklin

*"It is essential that the student acquire an understanding of and a lively feeling for values . . . Otherwise he — with his specialized knowledge — more closely resembles a well-trained dog than a harmoniously developed person."*

Albert Einstein

*"My feeling is that a pure intellectual development unaccompanied by a corresponding moral and spiritual development, is sure to lead humanity from one crisis to another."*

U Thant

If education is the key to national success, why is our nation now failing in the solution of social problems? We are spending more on education than ever before, yet crime, violence, alcoholism, drug addiction and other costly forms of misbehavior have reached crisis levels.

The answer is simple and can be heavily documented. Our educational system has somehow lost its previous emphasis on ethical instruction.

"We seem to have lost sight of one of the primary missions of education," wrote Bill Honig, California Superintendent of Public Instruction, "that of transmitting our cultural heritage to our youth."

Steven Muller, President of Johns Hopkins University, said that, "The biggest failing in higher education today is that we fall short in exposing students to values . . . universities are turning out potentially highly skilled barbarians . . . who have no real understanding of their society."

It is past time for America's leaders to recognize the problem and take corrective action. It is for this reason that we are please to reprint the following article from U.S. News and World Report.

## “Universities Have Fallen Down On the Job” of Teaching Values

James Billington, a major figure in American intellectual life, directs the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, which brings leading thinkers from around the globe to Washington, D.C., where they pursue independent research in the humanities and social sciences. He is a former professor of history at Princeton University and the author of several books.



TIMOTHY A. MURPHY—USAWWR

### “A smorgasbord curriculum” devoid of tradition

To a very large extent, American universities have fallen down on the job of transmitting values to students. Other institutions are also falling short, but the universities' failure is especially serious because historically they have had the task of imparting the essentials of the Western tradition to the leaders of tomorrow. Now young people in universities are generally offered a smorgasbord curriculum that fails to convey any sense of their own heritage.

Adding the study of new groups and new traditions to the curriculum and new diversity to the student body have been very healthy phenomena. But there has been a tendency to create courses of study that contain no values whatsoever. Instead of developing a curriculum that adds other traditions to those of Western culture, universities have produced a curriculum emancipated from any tradition at all.

There has also been a decline in faculty with a commitment to traditional values. As a consequence, universities do not provide young people with role models.

### Mimicking methods of the natural sciences

All of this occurred because major research universities became dedicated to specialization somewhat in imitation of the industrial process on the assembly line, where everyone has a specialized function. While you can produce a whole car through specialization, you cannot produce a whole person that way. And without whole people who have strong civic involvement and deep personal convictions and commitments, democracy cannot function.

At the same time this was going on, the human sciences were mimicking the outmoded, positivistic methods of the natural sciences and, in the process, losing the value-setting and transmitting function of the humanities. Today, the research structure in the humanities and social sciences is so attuned to coming up with smart new ways of cutting things apart that no one is putting things back together.

If we are going to be together as a people, we have to have a higher-educational process that puts at least a few things back together. Instead, we have a consumer-oriented curriculum that refuses even to make judgments that Shakespeare is more worth reading than Sartre or that the Bible is more worth knowing than Nietzsche.

### “Dishonesty corrosive of a healthy democracy”

The failure of the universities to transmit traditional values has left the field wide open to ideologies and methodologies—those modern substitutes for religion. Certain points of view accepted in academic guilds have become

the values transmitted by higher education. Schools impart values under the guise of imparting none. That is a form of dishonesty corrosive of a healthy democracy, which requires a pluralism of values contesting in an open market rather than the pretense of no values at all.

In history, for example, the prevailing mode of thought suggests that people's actions are not the result of conscious moral choice but of a combination of socioeconomic pressures and psychosexual drives. This conveys a sense that history is made by broad, impersonal forces—a perspective that diminishes the importance of individual choice and of the moral component in that choice. There's a tendency to see things in a deterministic way and not to study what is most human about people—their anguish, achievements and aspirations. This view of people helps make us a less caring society and may also play a role in the decreasing enthusiasm for politics.

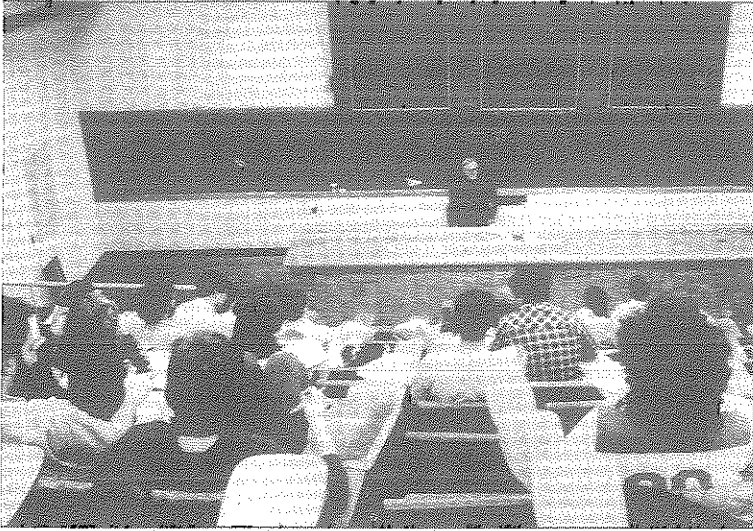
### “The invisible ethics of higher learning”

In the university's ostensibly value-free and tradition-free environment, there is nonetheless periodic recognition of the need to have some moral commitments. So there are demonstrations for some cause—investment in South Africa, American policy in Central America, etc. These involve important moral issues about which people

CHICK HARRITY—USAWWR



“As schools have done away with acting in place of parents on matters of morality, they have become permissive sexually.”



Universities now force students into "specialization in imitation of the industrial process on the assembly line."

should inform and express themselves. But these tend to be the only publicly shared moral enthusiasms on the campus.

I recently saw in the monthly alumni magazine of a distinguished university a long article praising a professor who was a constant political demonstrator as if he were somehow the repository of morality and conscience on the campus. Now, no one would deny him respect for affirming his convictions, but I have never seen a similar article about a professor who stands up for personal discipline in moral standards or more-traditional values.

The invisible ethics of higher learning consists of a remarkable combination of moralism about political and symbolic issues and self-indulgence on immediate, personal issues.

#### **Among students, "an unreal sense of freedom"**

Universities often unintentionally convey to young people the sense that self-indulgence is not only permissible but even desirable. As schools have done away with the old-fashioned view of acting in place of parents on matters of morality, they have become totally permissive sexually. Young people acquire an unreal sense of freedom—all the privileges of adults with none of the responsibilities. No one—least of all deans or chaplains—speaks out prominently for self-discipline. The emphasis is on adjusting to, understanding and accepting the student's right to do this or that.

Granted that the old restrictions and rules may have been difficult to enforce—and some may have been unduly repressive—but you cannot bring together thousands of adolescents and have neither role models nor the proclamation of standards. With no one publicly defining a norm, the modern university drifts into a kind of conformist nonconformism. As a consequence, universities end up producing, on the whole, very lonely people held together more by animal ritual than by a sense of richer human community.

#### **Inducing "profound cynicism" about learning**

One of the worst things about higher education today is that it induces a profound cynicism that often descends into apathy about learning itself.

There is so much intense reading, analysis and writing at high-pressure research universities that people are often turned off from serious use of their minds for the rest of their lives. By setting up this kind of intense assembly line for four years of college and then a few years of professional school, we are, in effect, saying that we are training machines, not training citizens for a democracy.

#### **Steps to save our society from "polarization"**

Because of all of these developments, we are seeing a growing split between those who are morally concerned but not intellectually trained and those who are highly articulate but morally insensitive. That is very serious for democracy: It may not survive a full generation of that kind of polarization.

Highly educated people sometimes seem the least equipped to look in the right place for goodness and beauty. A healthy society needs to develop goodness in people and beauty in things. But our sophisticated leaders often seem interested mainly in cultivating their own neopagan identities as "beautiful people" enjoying "the good things of life." Life itself sometimes seems subtly drained of substance—let alone moral standards—by the continued use of that dreadful word *lifestyle*.

If life is just a matter of style, one style is just as good as another; another is probably better, and one after another is no doubt best of all. But no one can live that way, and no society will long endure or even cohere without some basic moral standards. Sooner or later, they will be imposed from without if they are not found within.

That's why it's important to get basic moral standards and commitment back into the highest levels of our intellectual effort. After all, it was the combination of spiritual, moral and civic concerns with exacting intellectual activity that really built this country and made democracy work on a continental scale.

There are three ways that higher education can do this.

One is by making more of an effort, both in hiring faculty and in training graduate students, to bring in people committed to values as well as intellectual discipline. In many academic disciplines today, such commitments are discouraged.

Second, there has to be more willingness by universities to impart basic knowledge of the great works of Western tradition. Schools should have at least a few courses all students must take in which the great classics are taught and read. Few of the graduates of research universities today have the faintest idea about the Judeo-Christian tradition or the classical heritage from which the very seal on their diploma comes.

Third, and most important of all, there is need for greater variety among institutions of higher education. We need to break with the lock-step uniformity that is now so marked among universities, all of which are still functioning in an industrial image so that faculties are interchangeable parts: You can switch one bolt from Berkeley to Michigan.

What we ought to have are different schools teaching different values—a pluralism of authentic convictions rather than a monism of indifference. All Americans benefit from a healthy Catholic educational system and others which impart moral as well as intellectual standards. Many more institutions—and individuals within institutions—should have the courage and originality to follow their own paths.

# WHAT TO GIVE FOR CHRISTMAS

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and a New Year  
of Hope and Peace



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