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The University's Role as a Source of Culture

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I cannot answer all these questions but perhaps our little discussion on prejudice will provide us with a start. It has been said of President Sukarno that every time he delivered a speech, he led his country backwards. He led the fight for independence and in doing so gave the people the hope that with the expulsion of the colonial rulers, they would move into the golden age, but in time disillusionment set in and instead of dealing with the staggering economic problems the country was facing, he continued to fight the colonials. Thus he was calling the people's attention away from the problems at home by creating an outside enemy. His confrontation on Malaysia was of this nature. The frustrations of his people were displaced on the world outside Indonesia when what was needed most was dynamic leadership capable of attacking the problems at home. Nationalism is a process. It involves the achieving of identity as a people and this is a continuing thing. It does not involve, in an increasingly smaller world, a refusal to recognize the hard won identities of other peoples. In achieving this identity, it is not, as is sometimes thought, necessary to re-write history. It is more important to have a realistic perception of what happened in one's past and to distinguish between this realistic evaluation of the past and a romantic idealization of the past which often in times of tension passes for history but is nothing more than historicism.

International misunderstandings like personal prejudice are often based on false generalizations. Like personal prejudices they too can fulfill a national need of relieving frustration. Perhaps the ultimate solution lies in educating a body of citizens who have a passion for facts and are not taken in by facile generalizations and stereotypes. In so doing we will be developing a realistic way of dealing with national problems, which will prevent displacing them onto other vulnerable peoples.

JOHN F. DOHERTY, S.J.

*The University's Role As A Source Of Culture**

Certainly no one should have any doubts about the university's role as an agent of cultural transmission. For whether culture be spelled with a capital C, to signify the finer things in life, or with a

* Modified version of a lecture given as the second in the Anniversary Lecture Series sponsored by the University of the East in celebration of its 20th Foundation Anniversary, University of the East Manila, September 17, 1966.

small c, to mean both the finer things and everything else that is part of living, we know that it is the university's function to be interested in, to preserve, and to disseminate among its clientele every worthwhile aspect of culture.

More than that, the university has another obligation, one more clearly suggested by the title of this paper. I refer to the general expectation that the university be a source of new ideas, new views, and new evaluations which are not contained in the cultural heritage received from our predecessors. This university function of innovation may seem to be opposed to the earlier-mentioned role of cultural transmission, yet it is in fact not too different from it. This is so because the university cannot transmit culture without innovating, cannot teach without changing, cannot uplift its students without making them in some sense marginal and deviant.

Let us go back for a moment to the notion of culture and the several ways in which it may be transmitted. In its most general sense, culture is a term used to comprehend every imaginable human accomplishment at a given time in history, but in the sense in which it is most commonly used, the term is prefixed with a definite or indefinite article. We speak (wisely or otherwise) of "the culture" of the lowland Philippines or of urban America. We also make generalizations about the features of "a culture" typically found among peasants or of "a culture" characteristic of primitive societies. Beyond this, and using the term in an even more restricted sense, we can speak and do speak of the culture of some segment of a society. Thus, we speak of life among the so-called "Four Hundred," the wealthy elite of a given society. This is the subculture characteristic of one special part of the larger society. It is a way of life, a design for living, which is like the general culture in many ways but has a sufficient number of patterned significant differences to make it recognizable and identifiable as a special variety worthy of singular attention.

If you think about it a little bit, you will see that it is reasonable to consider the university life—at least the life that *should* characterize a university—as a genuine subculture participated in by those members of the university community who are *truly* members of that community. For while members of the university community, whether students or faculty, share many attributes with their age peers in the larger society in which they live, they nonetheless differ from them in a number of patterned ways. For one thing, their daily preoccupation is professedly with books and other instruments of learning, for the avowed purpose of imbibing, transmitting, disputing, and enlarging the body of knowledge with which they started the day. However, even more important than this or any other external difference (such as spending the day in buildings bearing a university label) is the fact that when

compared to the average individual in the greater, extra-university society, members of the university community are supposed to *think* differently. I have not said that all members of the university *do* think differently from the average non-university citizen, nor have I said that no non-university people think the way university people should. I have stated that members of the university community, by profession, are *supposed* to think in a way that does not characterize the *average* person who is not a member of that special segment of society. If we can more fully understand this peculiar way of thinking, we will be in a better position to appreciate why it is that the major task in the university is the creation of intellectual deviants.

Let me describe the kind of thinking which I think should characterize the faculty and, at least by graduation time, the students of a liberal arts college. It is the kind of thinking characteristic of the genuine intellectual, a way of thinking and valuing reflected in the basic qualities we usually associate with such a person.¹

One essential note in the definition of the intellectual is a *high regard for the things of the mind*. He sees truth and understanding as worthwhile goals for human effort, and sees correctness of reasoning as crucially important in this quest. Truth and logic are highly valued in themselves, and not as means to overpower or overawe fellowmen. This same regard for truth and understanding leads the intellectual to be open to new ideas, not because he feels that every new idea is better than its older alternative—on the contrary. But he gives each new idea he encounters a fair chance of acceptance in the ever present hope of learning something new, and of modifying or perhaps even reversing what he had earlier learned or concluded. The intellectual is an open-minded lover of truth.

This willingness to change in the face of new evidence is so important that it deserves mention as a second criterion of the intellectual, connected though it is with the first. The intellectual is *continually re-adjusting his conception of reality*. He learns from his experiences. He grows as he perceives, assimilating and making a part of himself the new things he comes upon day by day. His mind is vibrant and alive, never quite the same as it was the day before—most of its changes being tiny modifications and increments, the perception of an old reality from a new aspect or the realization that some judgment is in need of tempering. But every now and then there may be a major change, big shift in world view. For this possibility the intellectual is always prepared.

¹ The definition of the intellectual developed in the paragraphs which follow is taken from my earlier paper, "A Note on the Meaning of the Term 'Intellectual Elite' in the Philippines," *East-West Center Review*, III, 1 (June 1966), 1-6.

To this high regard for the mind and a consequent openness to change should be added a third ingredient: the *creation of new syntheses* for oneself and, when occasion permits or demands, for others. These syntheses are insights of more or less scope which result from the continually shifting conception of reality spoken of above. They occur when the mind, having shifted certain elements into new positions within the intellectual's perception of reality, stops and considers the total meaning of these modifications in the overall view. Ideally, the intellectual will be able to articulate these new understandings of reality to those around him, and the literate intellectual may express himself through the written world. But the essential note is the synthesis itself.

At least on occasion, these syntheses will be concerned with basic issues that have confronted thinking men for centuries—the meaning of life and death, freedom, authority, the apparent inevitability of human conflict. For the intellectual is not concerned merely with the trivia of human subsistence. He has an abiding, often hidden, *concern about basic human issues*.

As such—and the qualifying phrase is very important—as such, the intellectual *does not care to amass power or wealth*. His greed, if we may call it this, concerns things of the mind. His passion is for a better understanding of reality and of the conditions of human freedom and dignity. It is possible, needless to say, that a genuine intellectual may find himself in a position of power. He may even desire and work toward that goal, believing that he can bring to the post a wisdom and outlook that the non-intellectual could not. But if he does so, he plays a role quite distinct from that of intellectual, and runs the risk of feedback from that role into his original detachment from power and the trappings of power. We know such men as these, who have successfully run this risk, but they are rare indeed.

In summary, the intellectual may be defined as a person who has such a high regard for the things of the mind, who places such a high value on the understanding of reality, that he is ever open to the modifying influences of new evidence, ever creating new syntheses for himself and others, new conceptions of reality, particularly reality that touches on basic human issues. Further, this humble, flexible seeker after truth sees power and wealth as purely instrumental values and has no desire for them in and for themselves.

Oddly enough, perhaps, nothing that we have said requires that the intellectual be formally educated or, for that matter, even literate. Hence neither the illiterate in a primitive community, the high school graduate, nor the Ph.D. has any special claim to the title by reason of the years he has or has not spent in classrooms. Intellectual or not is a question to be answered in terms of the intellect. But it is a fact that we do expect that universities will justify their existence and their scholarly immunities by providing, *ex-professo*, the proper

habitat for intellectuals and a constant and abundant supply of intellectuals for the general society.

Now let me ask this question: Can we honestly say that all, or even a majority, of our faculty, let alone students, deserve to be called "intellectuals"? If the answer is No, as I suspect it must be for most universities of my acquaintance, then the university has a long, long way to go before it will be genuinely worthy of its name. There is a rough route between the present state of affairs and that highly desirable, but as yet unattained, state in which the non-intellectual professor will be in the minority and the anti-intellectual student a rarity.

Now let me ask a second question: Can we reasonably state that in the general society, intellectuals, as we have defined them, are even scarcer, proportionately, than they are in the university? If your answer is that true intellectuals are indeed very scarce in the general society; if you feel, furthermore, that the kind of mental curiosity and adventure characteristic of this intellectual is not only scarce but even *frowned upon* by the multitudes immersed exclusively in the traditional culture, then you will surely agree that the most important task of the university is not to transmit the traditional, popular culture (this seems to do rather well by itself) but to *transmit the precious university subculture and to introduce to this subculture students and faculty who have been to date largely unaffected by it.*

In the ultimate analysis what I am saying is this: the university's greatest task is to teach people to think for themselves, and to think honestly. In any society that I know of, this requires that the university be a breeding place of non-conformity, a home and a take-off point for marginal pace-setters trained not only to respect the past, but also to point the way to a future, the realization of which will justify their divine discontent.

FRANK LYNCH

A Remontado Legend From Ilocos Norte

The problem of the origin of the mountain populations of Northern Luzon is central in Keesing's *The Ethnohistory of Northern Luzon*. His minimal model for handling this problem, "...involves migrants from a lowland group moving into an adjacent mountain area" [Keesing 1962: 342]. Such movements were undoubtedly subject to multiple causation, and among those causes was the desire of some lowland peoples to flee from the effects of the Spanish Conquest. Thus, Keesing in discussing the history of Ilocos Norte seems to