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A Special Report On

**THE UNIVERSITY AS CITIZEN:
INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY AND
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

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ARTS?**

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THE CREATIVE SOCIETY

Bernard Murchland

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THE UNIVERSITY AS CITIZEN: INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A Special Report

William M. Sullivan

To act responsibly, we must know who we are. If higher education today is uncertain about its social responsibilities, as seems manifestly the case, then this suggests that the American academy is unsure about its institutional identity. For organizations as for individuals, responsibility follows from relationships. But relationships grow out of our purposes even as how we relate to others helps to shape our aims. Vital and successful institutions stand out by

their ability to maintain their direction and sense of meaning even amid significant shifts in the social landscape. Indeed, they can aid in providing direction for other institutions, keeping them true to their purposes. Now, however, as major economic and social change shakes American society, higher education is facing serious tests of its resourcefulness: Can the academy reinvigorate its central mission amid difficult and confusing conditions?

Higher education has shown such resourcefulness in the past, reshaping itself in response to new challenges and opportunities. A century ago, the academy reinvented itself through the creation of an innovative group of new universities such as Cornell and Chicago, along with the metamorphosis of some older private and state colleges, such as Harvard and Yale, the Universities of Wisconsin and California. These new institutions attempted to combine the European idea of research with the traditional American collegiate emphasis on teaching and the formation of citizens. The most creative among them would try to mediate the inherent tension between disciplinary specialization and curricular coherence by emphasizing the integrating nature of their public mission.

Higher education entered the new twentieth century by announcing its dedication to bringing the powers of cultivated intellect to bear on the economic, social, and cultural life of American democracy. Its sense of mission was often rooted in a reform-minded liberal Protestantism, yet its best aspirations soared beyond the sectarian as well as the purely national. The universities proclaimed themselves in service to great, panhuman ideals. Those aims were almost immediately compromised by the prejudices of class, race, sex, and religion, as well as by the imperious patronage of "captains of industry." Still, in the popular mind the mission of the academy has remained distinctly public and philanthropic. To reinterpret this earlier sense of public purpose for our time could start a recovery of the academy's identity, sparking renewed efforts to clarify what higher education is responsible for and to whom.

During the past half-century, higher education has cooperated with national initiatives

to provide educational opportunity to a larger segment of the population than has been true in other industrial nations. At its best, today's academy, diverse in form and descending from many traditions, illustrates the American ability to derive collective strength from social diversity and institutional pluralism. For example, the liberal arts institutions continue to have a distinctive and vital mission: to bring the tradition of the humane and civic arts to bear on the problems and concerns of the present. The religious traditions of service and prophecy go on spurring new forms of engaged learning and scholarship in many institutions. Community colleges are showing new vitality by reclaiming their role as innovators in expanding educational opportunity and as sites for civic development. As advocates of civic engagement remind us, campuses educate their students for citizenship most effectively to the degree that they become places for constructive exchange and cooperation among diverse groups of citizens from the larger community. All these traditions have importance. Moreover, by engaging with the needs of the communities that often lie just beyond the campus, institutions formed by the values of their past often are able to gain new energy from the creative sparks of fresh dedication to their defining mission.

Yet, at the same time it is far from evident that the historic defining purposes of higher education remain sufficiently alive to guide the academy through the difficult time of reorganization that it is entering. When the issue of purpose is raised within higher education, it is as often a source of division as a rallying point. Conflicting influences from various external patrons such as business, philanthropy, and government, as well as dissension within, have pushed academic leadership to simply shelve the whole issue of identity and purpose, relying instead on a bland managerialism to get by. But that strategy seems less and less viable. The academy has come under a good deal of skeptical scrutiny of late, to say nothing of serious attack from hostile critics. But we also get a powerful clue that something is importantly wrong from the sense of drift and demoralization that seems all too common in the world of higher education.

Despite its great size and prestige, much of American higher education today suffers from a sense of demoralization and decline. In part this problem is political and financial, as critics within state governments and elsewhere have mounted serious attacks on the integrity of the enterprise as a whole. Higher education is today a "mature industry," rather than the growing sector it was for most of this century. It is also a remarkably diversified and decentralized sector, ranging from elite research universities, both private and public, through private liberal arts colleges, religious schools, state comprehensive systems, and two-year institutions. This makes generalization risky. Fundamentally, however, there is a common problem afflicting this "mature industry." This is the question of identity. Higher education seems to have lost an animating sense of mission. There is much talk of reform, but mostly of an administrative and financial nature, with little attention to content and purpose. Yet, it is precisely the neglect of the question of purpose that has robbed the academy of collective self-confidence at just the moment it most needs to defend itself in increasingly bitter arguments about educational policy and finance.

In the absence of an updated version of its founding conception of itself as a participant in the life of civil society, as a citizen of American democracy, much of higher education has come to operate on a sort of default program of instrumental individualism. This is the familiar notion that the academy exists to research and disseminate knowledge and skills as tools for economic development and the upward

mobility of individuals. This "default program" of instrumental individualism leaves the larger questions of social, political, and moral purpose out of explicit consideration. These things, if considered at all, are simply assumed to follow from the "real" business of the higher education "industry." So, for example, the nation's leading research universities are touted as the "best in the world" as evidenced by the number of foreign students flocking to them. It's noteworthy, however, that this is a market measure -- i.e., the "value added" by U.S. degrees to internationally competitive professionals.

The consequences of the default program are indirectly evident in the type and quality of social leadership in the United States today. The leaders in business, government, the professions, the media, and religious and cultural institutions are, nearly without exception, graduates of higher education and, usually, of the most prestigious institutions. Moreover, the academy can count as its alumni and alumnae most of the top socioeconomic stratum in America, the upper 20 percent whom Robert Reich has dubbed symbolic analytic workers and whose outlook J. K. Galbraith has described as a "culture of contentment." This is the leadership core of the middle class. It is also the class that continues to benefit, as most Americans have not, from the current period of economic change sometimes called "globalization."

The most successful of this fortunate fifth of the American population have joined the wealthy in increasingly separating themselves from their fellow citizens by where they live, where they educate their children, the medical care they receive, the retirement they can expect. They have helped guide, or at least acquiesced in, the development of an increasingly divided and unequal society during the current period of self-proclaimed national economic success. Collectively, this comfortable minority has in fact if not in intent abdicated social responsibility for a narrow careerism and private self-interest. It is as if they have forgotten that they are members, and highly privileged ones at that, of the national society. In the absence of a sense of belonging to a larger moral entity, the most successful of Americans have in effect declared secession from the shared responsibilities of citizenship. Far from serving as a counterbalance, higher education, in the grip of the default program of instrumental individualism, has often promoted or colluded with this socially destructive process.

There are even more direct indications of the implications of the default paradigm of instrumental individualism for the future of academe itself. One might think of the University of Phoenix as the purest example to date of such a model of academe: a for-profit, expanding educational institution that grants degrees to adult learners in a variety of fields, all of immediate value to business and business careers. It is successful. And, notably, it operates without the expensive overhead "frills" of traditional academic institutions. The University of Phoenix has no permanent campus, no organized student life, and no permanent faculty.

How has the American academy arrived at this juncture? Ironically, perhaps, today's default program is the direct descendant of the celebrated post-World War II expansion of higher education. During the postwar decades, as Derek Bok has pointed out, American higher education came to enjoy an unprecedented level of prestige -- and public support. This was because of the key roles higher education came to play during the era of the Cold War. In effect, higher education took responsibility, with government help, for advancing two major tasks then seen as essential to the national interest: technological progress, especially in defense-related areas such as the silicon chip and the Internet, and the skill and status upgrading of an expanding middle class. Higher

education became an important partner with government and industry in the shaping of the postwar American order.

This second objective, the upgrading and expanding of the middle class, became the rationale for a series of federal initiatives, beginning with the G.I. Bill and continuing through Affirmative Action for women and minorities. These programs greatly expanded higher education while helping to make American society more democratic and inclusive than it had been before World War II. However, these efforts were as much a part of the logic of waging Cold War as the rapid development of military technology. If the United States was to compete ideologically with the appeal of communism abroad, so ran the rationale, its prosperity had to be visibly spread throughout the population, if only to refute the Communist claims that capitalism inevitably bred sharp inequalities and class tyranny.

With the end of the Cold War, the pursuit of greater social and economic equality no longer carries the same strategic importance. In the absence of ideological competition and external strategic threat, political support for increased economic and social equality has waned, especially among the already successful. As the political fortunes of concerns about social equality, already under attack from powerful social groups, have declined, so has government involvement in promoting access to higher education. As government effort has receded, the values of the market have assumed a larger role in determining the shape of the American academy, with the result that wealth has come to ever more completely determine both educational access and priorities. Business and industry, after all, are often the direct beneficiaries, as well as patrons, of much academic research and training.

It is important to note then, as Bok does not, that the postwar projects of higher education were heavily tilted toward instrumentalism from the start. They aimed at particular strategic outcomes thought critical to winning the geopolitical struggle with the Soviet Union. The relation of the means chosen to the purposes of higher education as an institution was a much less important issue. By focusing so relentlessly on contributing to external goals, the academy gradually lost the inclination to address these ends from the point of view of its own intrinsic responsibilities. In its most generous aspects, the postwar spirit imagined an academy that would take a creative role in improving the quality of democratic life in the American polity, including more open access to higher education. The aim was both to foster greater economic and social equality and to enlist for the nation previously ignored talents. Actual practice, however, emphasized immediate individual -- and institutional -- self-interest at the expense of both long-term democratic values and the academy's distinctive contribution to society's self-reflective capacities. Science was emphasized because it had proved to be the indispensable source of that technological advance that conferred military superiority, while access to higher education was promoted to spur economic growth by providing a skilled, more socially integrated professional work force. Federal interventions ensured that academic institutions structured themselves to facilitate this strategic program. These governmental efforts simultaneously provided a massive push toward increasing disciplinary specialization as the lion's share of resources poured into scientific and engineering fields. For their part, academic institutions were often quick to seize these often extravagant opportunities to advance their wealth and prestige, even changing their own identities and character in the process.

Just as federal largesse underwrote vast enterprises of research, so subsidies, grants,

and loans promoted college degree programs that allowed individuals to grasp their opportunity by learning the skills currently in demand. Any other aims of higher education became peripheral. The long-term result was the withering within the academy of certain habits of thought crucial for its own integrity as well as for the wider good of democracy. Academic leaders stopped what effects the new purposes were having on the character and identity of their faculties, their students, or on their institutions themselves. In the drive for Cold War supremacy, virtually anything could be exploited to serve the ends of national security and economic growth. Even at the time, this could seem a troubling maxim to guide public policy in a democracy. After all, this was the principle that underlay the unprincipled use of propaganda by totalitarian regimes. Its adoption by the United States threatened to undermine public trust in government -- a threat that was finally realized in the 1960s, with continuing consequences. The widespread use of these tools of expedience, given intellectual structure in the form of instrumental rationality, shaped not only state propaganda but much of commercial advertising and entertainment, even the public relations of the academy itself. It is hardly surprising, then, that within higher education, as throughout the nation, little thought was applied to inquiry into what institutional structures would be needed to ensure that the technologies -- and the newly credentialed middle class professionals -- would contribute to the goals of democratic life.

Under the pressure of Cold War imperatives there seemed little need to make conscious efforts at weaving these developments into the requirements for a self-reflective and mutually responsive nation. With the Cold War now over, higher education lacks even this instrumental rationale for connecting its functions of research and credentialing to larger public purposes. Academic spokespeople increasingly describe their enterprise in purely market terms, depicting it as a business much like any other, as they worry out loud about how to cultivate and expand their "customer base," especially business and consumers of educational services. They seem to assume that a kind of invisible hand will ensure that their single-minded pursuit of institutional growth and prestige will enhance the general welfare. However, the consequence of this embrace of the totems of the marketplace is that the American academy is losing its public mandate. It is thus no accident that despite the nation's manifest needs for investing in knowledge and skills in many areas of social importance, the academy has done so little to take the lead in proposing new public purposes to address these needs.

Various public figures have imagined candidates for such public efforts, such as the needs of the young and the poor in education, health care, and employment. We might add the strengthening of the nonprofit sector that provides so much essential social infrastructure, to say nothing of attention to improvement of democratic skills of public discussion. But these goals only make sense if one has first recognized the university as serving some larger public purpose as a citizen within civil society rather than simply a self-aggrandizing creature of the market. This is the perspective that is currently missing from the frequently anguished debates about what to do about higher education.

The malaise in the academy finds resonance in the sense of decline and drift within the ranks of the professions as a whole. The professions, after all, have grown out of the academy. The teachers of all professionals are themselves members of the professoriate. The professions remain further linked to the academy through in the common value of professionalism, the guiding ideal throughout higher education as well as professional fields of all kinds. Moreover, both the professions as a whole and higher education in

particular have been relatively privileged and successful institutions in the United States during the past half-century. It is note-worthy, then, that many professional fields have, like the academy, come to accent the marketability of their technical skills while de-emphasizing their contribution to civic life. In other words, the professions today do not typically seek to gain legitimacy by stressing the social importance of the knowledge they provide and the functions they perform for the community. Rather, they emphasize the specialized, expert knowledge and skills they provide in the market.

The importance of their social contribution is increasingly measured, in the world of both the professions and higher education, by the market value of their specialized skills, without serious reference to how these functions relate to any broader social well-being. Movement in this direction has greatly intensified in recent decades, further eclipsing the civic as opposed to the purely technical understanding of professionalism. The dominant view of professional knowledge has accordingly shed aspects of a more socially embedded conception of knowledge, with its concomitant ideas of social authority accruing on the basis of social responsibility, while displaying an increasingly instrumental and detached understanding of professional expertise.

This shift in perspective has accompanied and helped to justify an increasing degree of specialization in professional fields. But this development has also so separated knowledge from social purpose that expertise and skill appear as simply neutral tools to be appropriated by successful competitors in the service of their particular ends. This is, of course, an instrumental view of knowledge. It finds its natural complement in an individualistic and libertarian moral attitude that favors laissez-faire in most areas of social life. Since the professions have continued to importantly define middle-class aspirations, however, this emphasis has had important effects beyond the professional ranks. These developments in the culture of professionalism not only reflect but have helped foster an aggressively individualistic understanding of society. An important corollary to this conception of knowledge, however, has been the narrowing of the idea of responsibility, both individual and collective.

This perspective of instrumental individualism has become dominant in much professional and academic opinion. On the one hand, it has seemed to release individuals and institutions from unwanted moral responsibility. All they need do is obey the impersonal dictates of market forces. And, in fact, the change in attitude has progressed along with a shift in the allocation of rewards, talent, and vocational interest during the past 25 years. That is, there has been a conspicuous movement within the educated work force away from teaching and public and social service occupations toward more market-oriented, private-sector professional employment. Within the professional ranks, moreover, the past two decades have seen the ominous growth of increasing gaps in prestige and income between a few "stars" at the top of the heap over against their erstwhile peers. However, this retreat from social responsibility has not produced enhanced freedom or fulfillment, even for most professionals. Nor has it much improved the moral quality of American life. Rather, the consequences could be said to have been widespread vocational demoralization on the part of professionals -- a demoralization evident in a need to compensate through getting as much material reward as possible in the short term, within a society grown meaner, fiercer toward losers, and less hopeful about its collective future.

For higher education, the consequence of these developments has been a diffusion of identity, a loss of direction and defining purposes amid the pull of extraneous but enticing

lures to professional and institutional self-interest. Academic institutions have followed market trends unreflectively -- much as they have followed government-funding trends -- with often negative consequences for their long-term commitments and defining values and purposes. The results have been growing divisions of all kinds within and among institutions of higher learning as well as within professional ranks. With this has come the weakening of concern with public responsibility. Perhaps these trends explain the paradox of finding so many of the "world's best universities" amid conditions of urban decay and social neglect. This is indeed an instance of the detachment of knowledge from responsibility carried to an extreme degree.

These unhappy outcomes reflect a profound tension within the academic enterprise, a tension that can be healthy for the enterprise but which, if unnoticed or ignored, can wreck havoc, as it now threatens to do. Consider an analogy from a related, though very different, professional enterprise: journalism. Like higher education, journalism is in the business of shaping its public as well as responding to it. Both institutions play crucial roles in making democratic societies viable: their activities are critical if public deliberation is to work at all under modern conditions. The way journalism and higher education conceive and carry out their purposes -- the way they understand themselves -- is integral to their ability to function as responsible institutions.

Today, journalism, especially in the traditional core institution of the metropolitan newspapers, finds itself under heavy pressure to reshape itself into an adjunct of a strictly commercial enterprise, to become one more part of the emerging global "infotainment" industry. Yet, as Tom Rosenstiel of Columbia University's Project for Excellence in Journalism argues, this remains, as it has proven in the past, a self-defeating strategy for newspapers. It is worth considering Rosenstiel's argument since it provides an illuminating analogy to the current controversies in higher education.

Newspapers have often wanted to turn their reporting into directly profit-driven functions. The problem, according to Rosenstiel, has always been that readers resist and resent news reporting that they suspect has been concocted to please or manipulate them. As a result, papers -- and television as well -- have repeatedly found that the route to economic survival leads, paradoxically, toward investing heavily in news gathering and editorial independence. Building audience loyalty takes years. It also requires giving people information that may at first attract only a small following, just because it is new. "What journalism companies are selling," writes Rosenstiel, "is their authority as a public asset. And that depends, especially with an ever more skeptical public, on proving you're in it for more than a buck."

In other words, journalism succeeds commercially only when it actually acts as a citizen, when it places public service and concern for the integrity of its professional standards ahead of immediate profit. But it is equally important that the "professional standards" as well as the identity of both academe and journalism have been historically publicly focused in a strong sense. The identity of these occupations and their institutional homes only make sense in reference to what is common to a whole community, to a general, diverse, pluralistic constituency all of whom must nonetheless manage to cooperate. For both professions, truth must be publicly arrived at and publicly argued, while the most important truths under investigation concern not just what is happening or how things work but how we are to live as a nation.

The movement for public or civic journalism has galvanized much attention while also serving as a rallying point for efforts at reform in the media. The movement contends

that journalism can find its full significance only by seeing itself as a critical partner in the "public sphere" of opinion and acting accordingly. The public sphere refers to the diffuse set of connections through which members of a democratic society try to understand and guide their affairs by active participation. Part of the appeal of the public journalism perspective derives from recognition on the part of important segments of the newspaper industry that its future depends on cultivating a readership interested in its product. That readership turns out to have a peculiar configuration, as compared with other "market segments." Newspaper readers turn out to be overwhelmingly persons who describe themselves as concerned with public affairs, not just consumers of news. They are also disproportionately active in the life of the larger society and likely to want a share in shaping the news as well as reading it. Thus, material interests bolster the ideal aim of building a more active and cooperative relationship between journalists and the public.

Something similar describes higher education in relation to its "market." Support for the academy in its integrity also depends on persons who see themselves not just as consumers of services but as participants in a larger public realm. These are persons, often themselves graduates of higher education, who are interested in it not just for its instrumental value in enhancing their own and their offspring's economic marketability, but because they respect the contribution higher education makes to the society through promoting intellectual activity and making it more available to citizens generally. There is a naturally reciprocal relationship between academic institutions and this public. This public values higher education as a force for improvement and democracy, while the academy finds its meaning through trying to expand and build up this public. The big question is whether it is possible to give this understanding of higher education a formulation that is at once intellectually sound and generally comprehensible. To attempt this today is to enter an important debate. This debate is an ongoing national process of sorting out not only intellectual differences but rival principles of cultural authority and social organization as well.

The default program of instrumental individualism rests on a conception of rationality variously denominated as technocratic or scientific. This conception in its several forms has assumed dominance within much of the academy. Its core tradition and values are those of Positivist empiricism, a cultural movement descending from the nineteenth century that generalizes a certain interpretation of the natural sciences into a total cultural program. Positivism insists that because natural scientific research succeeds by straining evaluative judgement out of observation of phenomena, therefore the larger truth must be that facts can be understood independently of value. The conclusion Positivists have drawn is that while factual knowledge can be objectively verified, all questions of ethics and meaning are merely matters of taste and subjective judgment. Hence the affinity of positivistic understandings of research for "applying" knowledge to the social world on the model of the way engineers "apply" expert understanding to the problems of structure, logistics, or communication. While increasingly outdated as an interpretation of how natural science in fact has developed, this epistemology is firmly entrenched as the operating system of much of the American university. It provides an important intellectual warrant for the legitimacy of the instrumental individualism of the default paradigm.

Just as the currently ascendant default program contains at its core an epistemology -- a conception of knowledge and its purpose -- so the alternative of socially responsive higher education grows out of a counter ideal of knowledge and its purposes, together

with the kind of social relationships this ideal entails. The alternative to the socially detached, Positivist conception of knowledge and learning emphasizes the fusion of fact and value in practical experience, the interconnection of means and ends. Without denying individual talent or insight, this alternative model insists that knowledge grows out of the activities of a "community of inquirers," in the terminology of American Pragmatist C.S. Peirce. For this alternative understanding of the life of the mind, the common core of all processes of investigation is a kind of reasoning that is essentially social and in which there is always a purpose at work. Grasping and articulating this purpose is crucial because, whether acknowledged or not, such purposes in fact shape the practices of investigation and teaching. These purposes are themselves fundamentally rooted in the identity of the inquirers and their community, expressive of their common commitments and relationships.

The animating idea of this alternative conception of investigation and learning is that rationality is finally always practical, rooted in the practices of some social group. Knowing is an aspect of the overall effort by members of a society to orient themselves within the world. At its root, that is, reason is essentially "communicative," as knowledge is part of an ongoing conversation among inquirers about their world. Though not simply something manufactured by social processes, even knowledge of nonhuman nature is always mediated by the norms and aims of some social group. In modern societies, that group, or rather groups, has become institutionalized in the professional inquirers who staff the academy. As distinguishing aspects of human historical existence, rationality and knowing necessarily have moral and ethical dimensions. Knowledge and the process of inquiry bear on the quality of life and the nature of relationships among people. So, knowledge is finally a public value and concern, while those institutions that specialize in its discovery and interpretation necessarily exist within the framework of a modern society's overall goals and values.

This alternative understanding has in recent years begun to make significant impact on opinion within higher education. This has been due in part to the efforts of its contemporary spokespersons. Donald Schön's notion of "reflective practice," for example, has brought home the insufficiency of the received Positivist model of "applied science" in a variety of fields, both professional and academic. There is also the growing body of largely academic criticism of Positivism sometimes called the post-Positivist philosophy of science. Interestingly, these recent developments echo the founding ideas and program of the one indigenous American philosophical school, the classic Pragmatism of Peirce, James, Royce, and Dewey.

The significance of this tradition of thought for higher education and its contemporary problems has been worked out by Charles W. Anderson in such books as *Pragmatic Liberalism and Prescribing the Life of the Mind: An Essay on the Purpose of the University, the Aims of Liberal Education, the Competence of Citizens, and the Cultivation of Practical Reason*. Anderson has provided the useful clue that Pragmatism can provide a needed coherence in discussion of these issues through its approach. This might be called an inductive synthesis by means of critique. It is critical in the sense that it traces out the assumptions of the dominant model while also showing its, often unintended, consequences. It is an inductive method because it begins inquiry with the practices at hand and then directs that inquiry toward comparing those actual methods of the disciplines with their aims as these have been revealed and interpreted over time. By asking what particular practices are good for, this approach is also synthetic and

integrative. It points beyond the current state of professional fields and institutions toward possibilities for cooperation often only half-recognized by practitioners. Very importantly, it is an approach that reveals the public significance of the intellectual enterprises.

The kind of inquiry through practical reasoning urged by Anderson articulates a strong alternative to the presently dominant default program. The perspective opened up by the Pragmatist account of practical reasoning suggests a way to rethink and, ultimately, to reconstruct all three aspects of the identity of the American university: its aims as a setting for inquiry; its formative educational function; and the social responsibilities that follow from its civic identity.

The way in which social relationships are conceived and lived out importantly influences how knowledge develops. This is because every intellectual enterprise, as it develops its distinctive practices and lore, shapes its participants' sense of identity and their notions of what is important in the field. While the internal life of a field is the most basic determinant of the values of its practitioners, the worlds of professional activity remain, to varying degrees, importantly open to influence from other institutions, not least their patrons and critics. Who the members of a field imagine the audience or supporters of their enterprise to be matters significantly when it comes to deciding what sorts of questions will gain priority and who will be recognized as significant partners in the process of learning.

The development of postwar science and technology, for example, was significantly shaped by the imperatives first of national defense and then of corporate profitability. These social influences pushed research in the direction of devices that are increasingly complicated (and expensive) to design, build, and maintain. In contrast, other dimensions of technical and engineering excellence such as ease of use, repair, and replicability, or simplicity of design, received far less attention. This largely tacit process of purpose-driven inquiry has had fateful consequences in many areas. Think of the growth of the huge institutional research and engineering complex, much of it university based, which has been developed at enormous expense to support today's high-tech, acute care medicine. Yet, this form of health care mostly benefits the affluent. There has been far less support for research and applications in public health, advances that benefit the public more broadly and that experience in Europe and elsewhere suggest may be as effective, if not more effective, in improving the overall well-being of the population as the more expensive developments of medical high-technology.

By this standard, the record of the postwar university has been a very mixed report. As we have seen, the postwar era saw higher education deliver prodigious advances in scientific knowledge and its applications while opening professional status to wider segments of the population. At the same time, however, higher education has allowed external patrons to set priorities without engaging in much scrutiny of the larger point and value of these priorities. And the academy has rashly embarked on projects out of an unreflective self-interest. Neither has higher education typically been self-reflective about its own organization and the effects on its identity and aims of the practices of the disciplines. Despite protestations of its dedication to disinterested research, the positivistic separation of the rationality of technique from thought about value and purpose has made such omissions academic matters of course.

It is precisely this narrowness of aim that a focus on practical reason promises to overcome. Practical reason views epistemic practices, like those of every human

institution, as ultimately guided by partly implicit ideal aims. So understood, inquiry becomes a self-reflective process of investigating and appraising the quality of the performance, measured against some interpretation of its fundamental purpose. Of course, conceptions of purpose are always themselves open to question and challenge, and indeed the glory of the academy is that it is an institution that has tried to find ways to sustain just this process of ongoing scrutiny of practice and its aims. Yet, the academy has been as embarrassingly resistant as any other organization to applying its skills of inquiry to its own activities. The turn to practical reasoning is motivated by the desire to do just that.

Once this process of inquiry develops, however, new implications emerge. The questioning and appraising of specific practices within disciplines requires practitioners to become more self-aware about their function within their "community of inquirers." They typically come to adopt a stance toward their field that is at once critical and yet loyal to the basic aims of the enterprise, seeking to improve its aim at its essential purposes as they come to see them. Such a stance toward one's field obviously has strong affinities with the responsibilities of participation in an ongoing social enterprise. It becomes, as Charles Anderson has reminded us, an enhanced kind of citizenship, pertaining "not just to public affairs but to our performance in every realm of life." Once seriously involved in such inquiry Anderson suggests, the inquirers become progressively more aware of the importance of quality of performance, of how crucial self-reflective loyalty to purpose is in more and more areas of the life of their institutions, including how the disciplines and practices mesh or fail to mesh with each other in promoting the larger aims of knowledge that lead into the public realm.

Inquiry, properly understood, leads its participants into questions about the overall coherence and mutual import of their many specialized endeavors. It awakens responsibility by revealing how participants are already engaged in matters of public import and bearing. In this way, citizenship enters ever more seriously into the "job description" of academic professionals, not as an externally imposed "add-on" but as a defining feature of the very activities of inquiry and discourse themselves. Practical reason leads toward a collaborative search for practices that meet common purposes reliably and well. While this does not mean that the university loses its distinctive aims and organization, it does entail a more self-aware and deliberate relationship between the specialized concerns of academe and the problems and controversies of societies, such as our own, which are struggling to institute a fully democratic way of living.

We can only speculate what difference it might have made to the evolution of higher education during the postwar decades had such a conception of practical reason played a major role in academic thinking and administration. But the postwar record certainly confirms, even if ambiguously, that the link between the way knowledge is organized and institutional identity is real and important. Today's default program certainly fits much of the present organization of the academy. Yet, other efforts are under way to connect higher education with the society in ways consistent with the democratic implications inherent in the notion of inquiry as practical reason.

The notable upsurge of interest among students in social service volunteer programs, as well as the growth in institutional support for such efforts at every level of higher education, is testimony to the breadth of the sense that there is need for a change of direction, that academe must do more to educate for civic leadership and service. This movement is now very widespread, ranging from the national organization, Campus

Compact, founded by university presidents in the 1980s, to a plethora of indigenous efforts in rural as well as metropolitan institutions. Within the curriculum, the appearance of the movement for "service learning" or "experiential learning," while not uncontroversial, has opened up discussion and sometimes fierce debate on the place of social service in academic practice, as well as the question of the nature of investigation and its relation to practical experience and self-reflection.

There are other experiments even more directly engaged in the task of reorienting the focus of the academy, in its research as well as its educational function. These have been projects to connect the intellectual and technical resources of higher education with the problems of surrounding communities, sometimes conceived as whole metropolitan regions and sometimes as the immediate, often poor, urban neighbors of the academy. This is a more complex movement, still very much in process. Some have developed as interinstitutional partnerships, sometimes with philanthropic support. These projects have built linkages among schools, including whole school systems, and various academic institutions from community colleges to research universities. Others have proceeded in a more "grassroots" way relying on the initiative of groups of faculty, students, and administrators working with groups outside the academy.

It is noteworthy that the more successful efforts to redefine university identity around service and citizenship share a certain family resemblance. This similarity is rooted in the practice of inquiry as practical reason. First, such efforts consciously conceive their purpose to be changing the university's understanding of research and teaching, along the lines of critical practical reason, toward a much greater focus on social service and improvement. "Participatory action research" is one such methodological innovation. Second, these efforts have typically sought to develop this change in attitude by establishing enduring partnerships with institutions, such as schools, social service agencies or businesses, and health care providers, with which the academy already shares aims, practices, and often personnel, at least in the form of apprentice teachers and health care professionals. Third, such projects seem to succeed best in actually becoming institutionalized as standard academic procedure when they develop as genuine partnerships in which knowledge and practices evolve cooperatively rather than proceeding in a one-directional way from experts to outsiders.

The success of these efforts at changing the dominant tendencies within the American academy depends in important part on how clearly the participants understand what they are doing -- and how effective they can become at persuading others of the significance of what they are engaged in. To become more self-aware is the first step toward awakening one's responsibility. The second step is to recognize that serious self-scrutiny often leads to changes in identity, to growth in self-discovery, and a broadening of one's aims and loyalties. Identity, that is, receives important shape from social relationships and the way they are organized. In the Positivist scheme, researchers "produce" knowledge, which is then "applied" to problems, and problematic populations, by varying forms of design and engineering. On the other hand, if knowledge is developed through inquiry, the identity of the participants in the process will have bearing on the kind of knowledge discovered. These experiments suggest that academic institutions, like professionals, can realize their public responsibilities by becoming self-aware partners in addressing the needs of the nation's shredding social fabric. Once established over time by good faith on both sides, however, cooperation becomes self-sustaining as it manifestly produces an enlarged sense of identity and purpose for both the academy and

its partners.

These practical experiments, and the theory of practical reason, also have important bearing on the directly educational mission of higher education. Today, as for some time, higher education remains a powerful formative institution. It exerts profound social and cultural influences in shaping expectations about what skills and knowledge are valuable, what career aspirations are reasonable and admirable, what kind of society Americans want to have, what kind of people they want to be. Much of college experience, the "hidden curriculum," consists in "anticipatory socialization." That is, universities and colleges link vocational preparation with personal aspirations by creating the social and cultural context within which individuals choose and shape their goals and skills. The environment and ethos of higher education, the values and purposes that are seen by students to matter among faculty, staff, alumni, and administrators are among the most powerful shaping forces in American society. To the degree that this environment reflects only or mostly the values of the current default program, higher education will simply reinforce the tendencies toward social disengagement so evident among successful Americans.

Because of its great influence not only as a source of innovation but as shaper of outlooks, higher education is a preeminently public -- though nongovernmental -- institution. Everyone has a stake and an interest in what it does. It is a critical participant in the democratic public sphere. We in the academy need to connect seriously with our actual social position, both as an institutional sector within the national society and as particular organizations living with often very different neighbors in our local communities. But we cannot do this without serious reflection and discussion about our identity and purposes. And this requires social vision. A more responsible and connected institutional life requires that we think of our institutions as distinctive participants in a public sphere, a member of democratic civil society, with important responsibilities to the nation and to the wider world. And not just as knowledge-producing entities or service providers (the industrial-market conception), but as important shapers of identity (including our own), as explorers and conservators as well as critics of values and goals.

This is not a wholly novel approach in American life. Within the tradition of what could be called developmental democracy earlier leaders, such as the philosopher John Dewey, warned of the perpetual American tendency to collapse the aspirations to democracy into the straight jacket of what I have called the default program of individualism and instrumentalism. The price for this, these pioneers warned, is not more freedom but diminished possibilities for us all. On the other hand, democracy promises associated living. This means a fuller life for individuals as well as a more just and cohesive society. Individuals can develop a strong and confident sense of selfhood only as members of a society in which they can believe and invest their energies, one in which they can trust and know they are trusted. Higher education, too, finds its best self through contributing to such a society. This civic perspective can provide the leaders in academe with direction for developing a democratic yet reflective public. Such a public is the best guarantee that higher education will have a future in which it will be worthwhile to participate.

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