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## UA68/1 Forum, Vol. II, No. 2

WKU Potter College of Arts & Letters

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68/A17

# FORUM

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

THE STATE OF THE HUMANITIES

ARCHIVES

In a recent speech to the Council of Small Private Colleges, U.S. Education Commissioner T. H. Bell let it be known that "to send young men and women into today's world armed only with Aristotle, Freud, and Hemingway is like sending a lamb into the lion's den. It is to delude them as well as ourselves." In the same address he declared that "the college that devotes itself totally and unequivocally to the liberal arts today is just kidding itself." If the Commissioner of Education feels so strongly that humanistic study is an anachronism in the contemporary world, there is little doubt that higher education will experience some readjustment as a result.

What is the current state of the humanities in American higher education? Samuel Gould, Chancellor of the State University of New York, writes, "In our time, historians should note, the university has moved from a state of aloofness to one of deep involvement with the work of society, causing an almost total eclipse of liberal learning. The lessons of history are regarded almost with contempt in some quarters. The accumulated wisdom of epochs and civilizations is more and more dismissed as having little bearing on the unique situation of our day." A similar note is sounded by William Thompson, former professor of Humanities at York University, who observes that in assuming a consulting role the university has forfeited

its role as critic. It has lost its place as a refuge for fuller values of culture. Looking for power it has opened itself to the threat of demise all great powers face."

These are serious assertions. Yet looking at the many curricula of the modern university it is difficult to say that the traditional humanistic studies which from the beginning have formed the core of higher education are not being replaced with vocationally oriented programs and specialized courses whose advantages lie in their supposed practicality. What are the factors which have led to the current decline in the humanities?

Of primary import is what Robert Hutchins has designated an "erroneous notion of progress." He writes, "Our erroneous notion of progress has thrown the classics and the liberal arts out of the curriculum, over-emphasized the empirical sciences, and made education the servant of any contemporary movement in society no matter how superficial." Modern America has declared that faster cars, processed food, and wrinkle-free skin are indicators of real progress. Whatever is good for technology and the economy is good for mankind. Many years ago Babbitt fervently believed that contemporary educational practices were simply increasing the student's power to destroy civilization since it gave him control over nature but not over his own temperament. What would he say today!

The fascination of technological progress must not be allowed to numb the minds of the nation's decision makers of their responsibility to ask, Where will this all take us? Obviously, we all enjoy air conditioning and wash-and-wear clothing, but the genuinely important issues of life are not dependent upon the gross national product.



A second factor which has led to a decline in the humanities is the rapid growth of vocational education. In 1966 Daniel Bell, writing in The Reforming of General Education, said, "The current 'erosion' of the American college, does not derive from any meaningful development of curriculum but from the pressure on the student to choose a career early, to define a vocational intention, to specify a major, to narrow his interests, and to accelerate through school." So intense has been our concern for meeting the demands of the labor market that we have gradually allowed other forces to determine what constitutes a college education. Since government is by nature oriented to the immediate and the practical, we could hardly expect it to understand the long-range goals of education. While the spectre of a philosophy major ending up driving a taxi may offend the cost-benefit mentality of many educational bureaucrats, it doesn't especially upset the person who believes that the life of the mind is important in and of itself! Better Plato than Archie Bunker as you cruise around waiting for fares!

The humanities have always been somewhat leery of the pragmatic. In his inaugural address at Yale, Griswold noted that "the scholar has always had to contend with his times. The restless migrant between past and future is seldom at home with the practical men of his generation. The practical men of Athens put Socrates to death; of Rome forced Galileo to deny what he has seen through his telescope; and of Berlin drove a whole generation of scholars into exile."

It should be noted that it is not vocational training itself which constitutes the problem, but the gradual transformation of the university into something it

was never intended to be. The new models, according to Paul Wolff are (1) a training camp for the professions, (2) a social service station, or (3) an assembly line for establishment man. There is an important role to be played by vocational education, but it should not be allowed to replace humanistic education. If vocational education tells you how to do it, liberal education asks the more basic question of whether it should be done.

A third factor which threatens the future of humanistic learning is the apparent necessity of institutional survival. In the rapid expansion of the 50's and 60's, universities built facilities as fast as legislatures would allocate funds. But now in the 70's the picture is radically different. Enrollments are dropping and administrators are placed in the position of somehow coming up with students to match facilities. As a result several things have happened.

For one thing, the curriculum has changed. Gone are the days when it was expected that educated men should share a common intellectual heritage. This has been replaced with the cafeteria approach in which all that is necessary for a general education is to know something about several different fields of inquiry. What has happened, in fact, is that programs of study are increasingly projecting themselves back into the general education core. More and more of the student's time is utilized for professional or disciplinary work. The result is an increasingly narrow student who has not been allowed the advantage of exposure to other areas of thought which could well have been of greater interest to him both personally and professionally.

Out of concern for recruitment and retention, the university has developed courses which are believed to have "appeal" for the student. Who wants to enroll



in World Literature when he can take a course in B.C, or Peanuts? Who wants to memorize the rules of German grammar when he can get credit for "life experiences"? If part of being an educated person is the ability to distinguish between the trivial and the excellent, then it would seem to me that the university has an obligation to develop that capacity in its students by exposing them to the best in every field. Life itself will provide the mediocre and mundane, to say nothing of the banal and the trite.

In its struggle for survival the university has also opened its doors to people without the basic ability to conceptualize. The attempt to prove that an institution can maintain the same standards for graduation while lowering the requirements for admission has been a dismal failure. The composition of each class determines how the class must be taught. The presence of a number of unqualified students reduces the level of conceptualization to the point where the course no longer can be called higher education. At this point the cry of elitism is always raised. I have never understood why preventing a 97-pound weakling from playing on the football team is perfectly acceptable, but preventing a 97-pound mental weakling from matriculating in higher education is elitism.

But does it make any real difference? Perhaps we have outgrown the need for humanistic studies? Perhaps it belongs to a past era and should now be replaced with an ever greater emphasis on technological advance?

The major reason why I must disagree with this idea is that I believe the humanities to be absolutely essential to a free society. James Hitchcock, professor of history at St. Louis University, has pointed out the implications of the abandonment of the liberal arts as the core of higher education. These implications go far beyond mere pedagogy. He writes, "The tradition of liberal arts education rested on the assumption that

Western culture has a common base, a common tradition that should be accessible to all persons living in the culture, so that communication and a sharing of common values and perceptions are possible. It was considered the individual's necessary starting point in his search for self definition. Now this assumption is both explicitly and implicitly denied in favor of a radical individualism that sees each person as hopelessly locked within himself, able to articulate only in terms of his own feelings, his own perceptions, his own ambitions and desires."

Without a common culture "there is no society. Without constructive criticism a society cannot retain its freedom. The study of human culture as the central core of higher education and the development of inquiry and rational assessment are absolute prerequisites for a cohesive and self-governing group of people.

One of the most critical obligations of today's educational leadership is to reinstate the humanities in their proper role in higher education. If the demands of technology and economics direct the growth of education, they will lead it into captivity to their own purposes. While the humanities are by no means antagonistic to the immediate benefits of technology, they must always maintain sufficient distance to protest any development which in the long run will diminish human freedom or detract from the quality of life.

Robert H. Mounce, Dean  
Arts and Humanities



## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE POTTER COLLEGE FACULTY

The Western Kentucky University percussion ensemble, under the direction of EMERY ALFORD, performed at the Ohio-Kentucky Music Educators Convention in Cincinnati. Alford has been commissioned by the WKU Chapter of Phi Mu Alpha Symphonia Fraternity to write a percussion composition.

"Divertissements for Tuba" by BENNIE BEACH has been published by Tenuto Publications. It was premiered at the University of Tennessee under the direction of KENT CAMPBELL. Beach received a commission to compose a solo work for tuba from Dr. Bart Cummings of San Diego State University. One of his recent works was performed at the American Embassy in Saigon.

JAMES BENNETT was the speaker at the annual dinner of the Beta Club chapter at Warren Central High School in Bowling Green. His subject was "James Ohio Pattie, Rocky Mountain Trapper." He chaired a session at the annual meeting of the Community College Social Science Association in connection with the annual meeting of the Southern Historical Association which met in Dallas.

HOYT BOWEN chaired a paper session at the Kentucky Philological Association.

HOWARD CARPENTER lectured on "Music in Kentucky" to the Stephen Foster Club in Bardstown, The Symphony League in Owensboro, and the Larths Club in Bowling Green.



MARY AND KENNETH CLARKE co-authored The Harvest and The Reapers: A Study of Kentucky's Oral Traditions, published by the University Press of Kentucky.

WHITNEY COMBS was elected vice president of the Kentucky Theatre Association.

HELEN CROCKER spoke at the Filson Club in Louisville on "Steamboating on the Green and Barren Rivers."

NANCY DAVIS was reelected archivist at the Kentucky Philological Association.

CARLEY DODD presented a paper, "Correlates of Innovativeness in the Intercultural Diffusion of a Non-Technological Innovation," to the Speech Communication Association Convention in Chicago. Dodd and PAUL CORTS published "The Fusion of Principle and Practice: The Theory and Use of Communication Games and Simulations" in the Kentucky Journal of Communication Arts. Dodd has been appointed associate commissioner to the Intercultural Commission in the Speech Communication Association and has received a grant from the Kentucky Humanities Council to conduct a series of programs dealing with "The Elderly and Their Relations with Public Agencies."

JIM FLYNN read a paper entitled "Games in 'The Rape of the Lock'" at the annual meeting of the Kentucky Philological Association.

PETER GILMAN read a paper entitled "Who is Pantagruel?" at the Mountain Interstate Foreign Language Conference.

JOE GLASER read a paper, "The Tragic Dimensions of Christopher Marlowe's Hero and Leander," at the Kentucky Philological Association.

JAMES GODFREY was chairman of a panel discussion on, spring drop-outs at the Ohio-Kentucky Music Educators Conference in Cincinnati. He is a member of the Youth Orchestra Steering Committee for the development of a Bowling Green-Warren County Youth Orchestra sponsored by Community Education. Godfrey presided as chairman of a session featuring the WKU percussion ensemble at the Ohio-Kentucky Music Educators Conference.

CHARLES GUTHRIE spoke at the Masonic Lodge in Burkesville, and in Glasgow. He had an article, "Rob Morris and the Early Years of the Grand Lodge in Kentucky," published in The Philalethes.

VIRGIL HALE directed the Franklin Community Chorus in the annual Christmas concert and was appointed to the Kentucky Bicentennial Committee of the National Music Council. He is in charge of radio and television programs for the Bicentennial Celebration. He was recently elected to the board of directors of the WKU Credit Union and appointed Kentucky's deputy governor for the National Opera Association.

PAUL HATCHER has been appointed coordinating judge of the 1975 International Literary Contest sponsored by Sigma Delta Pi, National Spanish Honor Society. Since 1966, Hatcher has been Kentucky State Director of Sigma Delta Pi.

JAMES HELDMAN was chairman of a section meeting at the Kentucky Philological Association and a participant in a symposium on Humanitas-Utilitas.

MARTY HENTON is president of the Third District Art Association and has been appointed to the executive council of the Kentucky Art Education Association. She was Kentucky Youth Art Month chairperson. Her committee received the Grand National Youth Art Month



Award, and a presentation will be given on Youth Art Month at the National Art Education Association Conference in Miami. Her article, "Youth Art Month, Kentucky Style," appeared in Art Teacher.

JAMES HIGHLAND was reelected to the board of directors of the Louisville Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi. He has recently published forty major newspaper articles.

MARGARET HOWE read a paper, "The Kingdom of God in the Gospel of Thomas," at the Institute of Biblical Research, southern section, at Asbury Theological Seminary.

CARL KELL'S article, "To Create a Business: A Simulation in Group Discussion," appeared in the Journal of Applied Communications Research. With LARRY WINN, he co-authored a basic speech text, Guidebook in Speech Communication.

WILLIAM LANE published "Theios Anēr Christology and the Gospel of Mark" in New Dimensions of New Testament Study and read "The Apostle Paul--Messenger of the Covenant Lawsuit of God" at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Dallas. He also read "What's New in the New International Commentary on the Gospel According to Mark?" at the regional meeting of the Institute of Biblical Research at Wilmore.

WILLIAM LEONARD was reappointed Kentucky's representative to the Southeastern Theatre Conference and will serve on the governing board through March, 1976. He is chairman of the membership committee for the University-College Theatre Association in Kentucky.

MARION LUCAS interviewed Dr. Frank E. Vandiver during the visit of the Civil War scholar to Western. The interview was video taped.

GEORGE MCELVEY chaired a paper session at the Kentucky Philological Association.

GERALD MATLICK exhibited in the Eight State Painting Show at the Speed Museum in Louisville. He was chairman of the Bowling Green Youth Art Month Committee and co-chairman of the Warren County Youth Art Month Committee.

JIM WAYNE MILLER interviewed Jesse Stuart when the poet appeared at Western. The interview was video taped. Miller is included in New Southern Poets, published by University of North Carolina Press.

LYNWOOD MONTELL was elected secretary of the Folklore Section of the South Atlantic Modern Language Association.

ROBERT MOUNCE lectured at Montreat-Anderson College on "The Marks of an Educated Person" and "The Contemporary State of Higher Education." At Murray State University he lectured on "Can Our Commitments be Rationally Justified?" and at Wheaton College on "The Humanities: Essential or Expendable?".

RICHARD MURRELL read a paper, "The Communication Skills Development Series and Its Uses in a University Speech Clinic and Other Clinical Settings," at the Southern Speech Communication Association in Tallahassee. Murrell published "Oral Imitation of Nonsense Syllables, Isolated Words and Phrases," "Auditory Discrimination of Minimal Pairs," and "Articulation of Consonant Speech Sounds" in Communication Skills Specialties. Other articles include "O.K. Vanmeter," "The Splang Articulation Screening Test," and "Oral Imitation, Auditory Discrimination and Articulation of Consonant Speech." He is congressional action contact for Congressional District Two, representing the American Speech



and Hearing Association. He served as program chair; man of the Speech and Hearing Interest Group for the Southern Speech Communication Association's annual convention and is regional editor of the Kentucky Speech and Hearing Association Journal.

RONALD NASH participated in a panel discussion in Minneapolis on "American Conscience in the Post-Watergate Era." He took part in a panel discussion in Boston on "The Problem of Human Suffering."

JOHN WARREN OAKES was juror of Lincoln Days Bicentennial Art Exhibit. Oakes was one of forty-eight artists in the United States who were elected by jury to the Exhibiting Artists Federation, which will circulate national touring exhibitions of their work.

RAUL PADILLA read a paper, "Las lenguas romances en el Renacimiento español," at the Mountain Interstate Foreign Language Conference.

JAMES PEARSE conducted a workshop, "Film Techniques and the Creation of Tone by the Oral Interpreter," at the Otis J. Aggertt Memorial Interpretation Festival at Indiana State University.

BETTY PEASE gave a faculty recital in the Ivan Wilson Recital Hall and a concert in Franklin for the Music Club. The performance of her composition for children's orchestra and narrators, "The Owl and the Pussy Cat," was given at Western Kentucky University.

ROBERT ROBERTS read a paper, "Rudolf Bultman's View of Christian Ethics," at the southeastern regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Atlanta.

CLAUDE ROSE was chairman of two sessions of the Ohio-Kentucky Music Educators Convention. He judged a music festival in Columbus, Indiana, sponsored by the

Indiana Music Educators Association.

IVAN SCHIEFERDECKER exhibited in a national invitational exhibit of printmaking at Central Washington College and had a one-man show of prints and watercolors at Denison University in Granville, Ohio.

JULIUS SCOTT read a paper, "Textual Variants of the 'Apostolic Decree' and their Setting in the Early Church," at the southern section of the Institute in Wilmore.

WALKER RUTLEDGE presented a paper, "From Intensive to Expansive: Whitman's Search for Form in His Early Prose Fiction," at the Kentucky Philological Association.

MAURICE SEVIGNY was elected vice president of the Kentucky Art Education Association and presented a paper, "The Teaching of Crafts as Creative Expression," to the Ohio Art Education Association. He was guest lecturer to a group of art education majors at the University of Cincinnati, speaking on "Audio-Visual Packaging for the Art Teacher."

FRANK STEELE read poetry at Chandler School in Auburn and at Volunteer State Community College in Gallatin.

RICHARD STONE received a grant at the December meeting of the Faculty Research Committee to do a study of "A History of the Kentucky Militia, 1775-1976."

LARRY WINN published an article, "Fancy Farm 74: A Study in Contrasts," in the Kentucky Journal of Communication Arts. He and Carl Kell created a television production for WBKO, which was aired December 4, 1974.

BENJAMIN WOODRUFF played the solo oboe part with the Owensboro Symphony Orchestra in Owensboro.



FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

1975-1976

- September 22 Aspects of the Peking Opera  
Hu Hung Yen (C.O.S.I.D.)
- October 2 Eugene Fodor, Violinist
- October 25 Hamlet  
October 26 Merchant of Venice  
by New Shakespeare Company
- November 9 Multigravitational Experiment Group,  
One Week Dance Residency
- December 9 Emlyn Williams as Charles Dickens
- January 29 Prague Madrigal Antigua,  
16th to 18th Century Music  
Vocalists and Instrumentalists
- February 29 Pittsburgh Symphony Chamber  
Orchestra with Lorin Hollander,  
Pianist
- March 27 Edward II  
March 28 Three Sisters  
by City Center Acting Company



PATRICK TUCKER Directs Western Students in  
Production of Romeo and Juliet

Patrick Tucker, Director in Residence, will direct the Western Kentucky University Speech and Theatre production of Romeo and Juliet.

In 1973 Patrick Tucker was engaged by the Royal Shakespeare Company as Assistant Director. He went to Stratford-on-Avon and worked with John Barton on his highly praised production of Richard II. He then worked on As You Like It and The Taming of the Shrew, then Toad of Toad Hall. He did his own Studio productions of Columbus and Escorial by Michel de Ghelderode



and a Christmas Kaleidoscope with Alan Bates and Eileen Atkins. In 1974 he staged Richard II in New York, Stratford and London, then worked again with John Barton on Doctor Faustus for the Edinburgh Festival and London. He also redirected The Hollow Crown and Pleasure and Repentance in New York, Denver, and Ottawa.

He has been teaching and directing at several drama schools, including the R.A.D.A., and very recently at Drama Studio in London, which has a large intake of American students. While on a visit to Egypt last Christmas, he held two workshops at the American University in Cairo.

A command performance of Romeo and Juliet will be presented for Potter College on Wednesday, April 16, at 7:30 p.m. The Spring Reception will be during the extended intermission. Admission will be by reserved ticket only.

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