THE GREAT CIVILIZED *Conversation*

Education for a World Community

WM. THEODORE DE BARY

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EDUCATION FOR A WORLD COMMUNITY

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Preface

The essays selected here are representative, I hope, of my academic work as a whole, but what they have most in common is that they all stem from a happy accident of my early life as a college student. As a freshman at Columbia in 1937, attending my first class in the core course Contemporary Civilization taught by Harry J. Carman (later dean of the college), almost the first thing he said was, "Of course you realize that when we talk about contemporary civilization, it is just Western civilization. Some of you should start to think about how we can expand this to Asia." I took him up on that suggestion, and almost everything in this book flows from it—scholarship in the interests of an educational core curriculum including Asia. And just as this book stems from my encounter with Carman, most of the essays included here are the outcome of my response to someone else's initiative.

Just after Congress enacted the National Defense Education Act in 1958, the very thoughtful head of the Office of Education, Donald Bigelow, sponsored a conference to discuss what should be the larger education parameters within which this new federally sponsored program

for language learning, intended initially to serve military purposes, should fit. The keynote address that he asked me to give (later published in the *Journal of Liberal Education* in 1964) summed up all I had learned in following up on Dean Carman's suggestion. Much progress has been made since then, but even fifty years later this keynote still expresses for me the purposes that have guided most of the academic work I have done since—including research in East Asian sources that would enable me to carry out that broader aim.

The essays in part 2 all partake of that same intention, but for me they represent the discovery of aspects of major Asian traditions that shared many of the same educational needs and purposes in their own historical and cultural contexts.

Part 3 reflects in a different way accidents of my own personal history—invitations received to give lectures in honor of distinguished teachers I have known. The cases reproduced here are only a sampling of the larger number of scholar-teachers who have influenced my work. At the risk of seeming arbitrary and invidious, I mention here only a few, historians like Carlton, J. H. Hayes, and Jacques Barzun; Ernest Nagel and James Gutman in philosophy; and Mark Van Doren (through his writings), as representative of a larger number of devoted teachers in the Columbia core curriculum not dealt with here. Mostly, I dwell on testimonials to East Asian scholars who fulfilled the same ideal.

For his help in the final proofreading of this manuscript, I am greatly indebted to Alexander Sullivan, and for its final processing, William Gaythwaite.

Over the years, Jennifer Crewe has presided over the publication of my books at Columbia University Press, and I take this occasion to thank her again for her ready understanding of my work and her wise counsel.

Finally, I close, as in all other prefaces I have ever written, with a tribute to my wife of sixty-seven years, Fanny Brett de Bary, and my mother, Mildred Marquette de Bary, both of whose heroic examples have inspired my whole life's work. Both were notable exemplars of keen intelligence, generosity of spirit, leadership ability, and Christian self-giving in service to family and community.

Introduction

For centuries, a conversation has been going on in both Asia and the West about the values that could sustain a human community, but there has been only limited exchange *between* the two conversations. Today, the challenges of the contemporary world are such that the civilizing process can only be sustained through an education that includes (at least in part) sharing in the traditional curricula developed on both sides, based on classics now recognized as not only enduring but world class.

The essays in this book speak first of all to the nature of a core curriculum as it has developed recently in the West, then how a kind of core curriculum also developed in East Asia as part of a liberal education "modern" for its own time. Finally, examples are given of recent Chinese and Japanese scholars who have helped us share in Asian classics by articulating their more traditional values in a modern context.

Paradoxically, among the things that threaten this sharing of the wisdom traditions in a new world community is the idea much touted recently of the globalization of education as an accompaniment to

the spread of a global economy. This "globalization" calls for college curricula to include a large component of multicultural studies and to promote study abroad at new centers around the world that are in touch with current trends. Ironically, this movement only extends a process of globalization that has already enveloped much of Asia, as education there has become more and more geared to the world market. It dictates how young people can qualify for and compete in this market, most often at the expense of any continuing discourse with either their own or others' humanistic traditions.

So far, the proponents of globalization have seen its open-endedness and unlimited variety as goods in themselves, depending only on how well they fit prevailing economic trends and develop a mentality keyed to the opportunities of the free market. The idea is to open educational free markets anywhere in the world, counting on the already considerable appeal of "study abroad" programs and further enhancing them.

To some degree, this study-abroad idea can indeed be compatible with a core curriculum already incorporating a balanced program of humanistic learning at the center (required of all students) along with one or another elective specialization. In such cases, the study-abroad program can well fit in with the specialized elective, especially where language learning is a key to the study of another culture. Whether it would do anything for the core humanities program is another matter.

The problem becomes particularly acute at colleges where an attempt has been made to incorporate Asian civilizations within the scope of the core. In most cases, this necessitates extending the core into the third and fourth years, which tends to conflict with study abroad at a center that likely does not itself offer such core courses. In such an event, any kind of priority given to study abroad tends to be at the expense of a truly global core—it will privilege one particular culture at the expense of an approach that should emphasize human commonality as well as cultural diversity.

In effect, this means that it is truly difficult to define a "globalization" program that also has a genuine core. It depends, of course, on what one means by core and whether or not that core is based on classics or great books representative of more than one cultural tradition.

A main purpose of the essays that follow is to argue that either a true core or true multiculturalism must draw on classics from more

than one such tradition because the process of reading and discussing the classics should itself involve the bridging of cultures in order to establish the terms of equivalence or difference that are not themselves culture bound.

At this point, however, I want to step aside to East Asia in order to establish a kind of universality we can hope to talk about, one contrary to the impression created by one "great books" program highly promoted in the twentieth-century West, i.e., the Hundred Great Books or Hundred Great Ideas, which were seen by Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins as exclusively to be found in the West. Those finite numbers quickly yield to the recognition that the classics of the Asian tradition merit like, if not equal, attention, as already many of the most influential minds in the modern West have recognized by the interest they have shown in Indian, Chinese, and Japanese classics.

Moreover, the idea of providing a defined program for the reading and discussion of the classics—a curricular core—is not peculiar to the West. Without going into its long history in the West before the twentieth century, let me just point out that it has as long a history in East Asia as it does in the West.

It goes without saying that almost any school of learning in early times had to decide what its own classic canon consisted in—what would be the heart of its curriculum. In early China, this became a matter of public (not just private, scholastic, or sectarian concern) in reaction to the unification of the imperial state. Although early Chinese schools had their own way of referring to a classic canon on which they founded their teachings, the most notable efforts to certify classics for public or official purposes came in response to the repressive measures of the newly unified empire of the Qin dynasty (221–207 b.c.e.) when it acted to suppress the Confucian classics through the infamous "Burning of the Books." This led to efforts under its successor, the Han dynasty, to restore the classics by certifying certain surviving texts as authentic for public purposes. When I say "for public purposes," it means primarily for the preparation of those aspiring to serve in positions of public office. This leadership class was limited to those who had access to education and a literacy that would enable them to communicate with a bureaucratic ruling class. Among Confucians, this meant a concern for individual self-cultivation balanced with service to others.

After a subsequent long period of disunity, the question arose again with the reunification of China by the Sui (589–618) and Tang (618–906) dynasties. Reunification brought a massive attempt to re-create a bureaucratic structure staffed through civil-service exams. One of the examination fields dealt with the Confucian classics, but it was only one of several paths to accreditation, others of which included belles lettres, Daoist texts, hydrology, military arts, law, and astronomy. In this case, however, we could not consider the Confucian classics as a true "core" and the others as technical specialties because the most sought after and prized degree was the one in literary styles (not surprising in a Tang culture with a strong aesthetic orientation), and the "classics" exam, which stressed rote learning of the classic texts, was regarded by most candidates as too routine and mechanical and was criticized by serious scholars as altogether too lacking in either moral seriousness or intellectual challenge.

Such was the prestige of the Tang dynasty, however, that its neighbors Korea and Japan readily adopted the Tang examination system and curriculum as features of a new advanced world culture "modern" for its time. Attending this was a new educational system that even leading Buddhist thinkers such as Saichō (767–872) and Kūkai (774–835) tried to incorporate in the training of monks. In these cases, their aim was to combine Confucian learning with Buddhist spiritual training, so that monks would be able to provide social service along with religious instruction. In this connection, both Saichō and Kūkai incorporated the study of Confucian classics along with Buddhist scriptures into a basic core training, which Saichō said should consist of two-thirds study of Buddhist texts and one-third Chinese classics.[1]

Kūkai, citing the Chinese example of universal schooling for commoners as well as the elite, recommended the establishment of a School of Arts and Sciences that would include the study of Confucian and Daoist classics, as well as Chinese histories, along with Buddhist texts, in a program of universal schooling both religious and secular, citing sayings of both Buddha and Confucius: "The beings in the three worlds are all my children, roars the Buddha [in the *Lotus Sutra*]." And there is the beautiful saying of Confucius (*Analects* 7): "All within the Four Seas are my brothers. Do honor to them" (SJT 1:171).

The third example of the defining of a new core curriculum comes with the rise of Neo-Confucianism in Song-period (960–1279) China. In this case, the Neo-Confucians sought to reassert the primacy of the Confucian classics, arguing that Buddhism and Daoism had failed to deal with the civil disorders of the late Sui and Tang dynasties (eighth–tenth c.) and that only Confucian teaching based on substantive moral values could do so. At the same time, they reinterpreted the classics (especially the *Classic of Changes*) to provide an alternative to the metaphysics of Buddhism and Daoism.

The culmination of this process came with the synthesizing of a new curriculum based on the so-called Four Books and Five Classics but including new "classics" based on the writings of Zhu Xi's recent predecessors in the Song. The Four Books included, besides the *Analects* and *Mencius*, texts drawn from the *Record of Rites* entitled the *Great Learning* and the *Mean*. This represented an intense focusing on a few texts that could provide a core for the structuring of a new curriculum, aimed at defining a systematic learning process (in the *Great Learning*) and mind cultivation (in the *Mean*) that would serve as a foundation for the political process and social improvement that neither Buddhism nor Daoism could provide. Starting with the Eight Stages of the *Great Learning* ("the investigation or recognition of things," "extending of knowledge," "rectification of the mind," etc.), it applied this process to the methodical study of the classics in the light of interpretations and speculations found in the writings of Zhu's Song predecessors, who had developed a Confucian metaphysics as an alternative to Buddhism and Daoism. Primary features of this new core, in contrast to earlier, more compendious collections of classics, were its intense focusing on a few primary texts and from this base working out to a larger body of texts, listed by Zhu in the more extended curriculum he set forth for advanced study in higher schools and in preparation for civil examinations. In this larger curriculum he included Daoist classics, Legalist writings, and a wide range of histories as well as recent thinkers in the Song.

Later, Zhu's anthology of recent thought, the *Jinsilu* (*Reflections on Things at Hand*) became a fixture of the Neo-Confucian core curriculum. It was organized under the headings found in the first chapter of the *Great Learning*, so that even the outer ranges of learning were to be directed in accordance with the same initial principles Zhu had

foregrounded in his study sequence—a focused core to start with, leading out to open horizons, the exploration of which would still be guided by core principles.

One might notice here a striking omission—no Buddhist texts. The fact is that even in the Tang period, which was so powerfully infiltrated by Buddhism, the examinations had no provision for Buddhist texts, nor was there in the Song. Later, when a Yuan-dynasty prime minister, catering to the Mongols' nominal identification with Buddhism, proposed that there be such exams on Buddhist scriptures, a leading Chan (Zen) master came to court to protest it, arguing that Buddhism does not rely on texts, public discourse, or public service. This fact did not keep Zhu Xi from taking Chan seriously and engaging with it philosophically, but its depreciation of textual study and public discourse disqualified it from inclusion in the core curriculum.

This limitation on Chan, however, did not at all apply to Neo-Confucianism or disqualify Zhu's core curriculum from widespread adoption all over East Asia—in Korea, Tokugawa Japan, and Annam (Vietnam). What might have been thought primarily a Chinese revival of Confucianism was quietly recognized by the Mongol conquerors of China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as a universal teaching, a basic humanistic ethic, which could serve to pacify and consolidate their own rule. Then it was from the Mongols' own official adoption and sponsorship of it that the Koreans and Japanese came to know about and accept the Neo-Confucian core as the latest and best answer to the key problem of their time—the need for national and international stability based on a shared public trust.

Indeed, when Fujiwara Seika (1567–1709), the leading Japanese proponent of Zhu's teaching as adviser to the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate, had to deal with a problem in the expanding Tokugawa commerce with Annam (in the "free market" of the time), he appealed to the Neo-Confucian ethic as a means of resolving a trade dispute, citing the virtue of mutual trust as the underlying principle of the Neo-Confucian humanist ethic—trust as true to the core.

Perhaps this much of the Neo-Confucian experience will suffice to provide an Asian perspective on the importance of the core in Asia as well as in the West, and more particularly on the importance of Neo-Confucian contributions to a great civilized conversation, the main subject of this book.

THE GREAT CIVILIZED CONVERSATION

Part I

EDUCATION AND THE CORE CURRICULUM

I

Education for a World Community

It is a good sign that today, as we meet to consider how the new world situation may affect our college education, our theme should suggest an awareness not only of the revolutionary changes going on around us but of the undiminished importance of liberal education. "Liberal Learning in a Changing World" are the terms in which one recent book has formulated the matter for us in 1964.[1] To me, it is a favorable indication of the progress made in over a decade of continuing discussion. In 1950, one had to argue the point with proponents of so-called non-Western studies that a broadening of the curriculum should be considered in the context of liberal education as a whole and not simply offered as a response to the shift in the world power balance. Now that the political factor has been brought into proper relation to the broader human aspects of the problem, we may be prepared to pursue its liberal implications further.

One of these is certainly to recognize that liberal learning has *always* taken place in a changing world. This is not the first era to experience revolutionary change, nor are we the first teachers to deal with it. It is

false to think of the West as living in a world all its own, unchallenged until now by expanding horizons. Before Plato's time, Greece had experienced invasion from Asia, and by Alexander's it was more deeply involved in that continent than we are today. Aristotle, the father of scholastic philosophy and also Alexander's mentor, contemplated no static world: his bust in stone, discovered in the ruins of northern India, bears silent witness to the cultural revolution that swept East and West in those days, from Gibraltar to the Japan Sea. Nor was medieval Europe immune to change and unresponsive to the East. Its confrontation with Islam helped stimulate the revival and creative development of scholastic philosophy. And if we look beyond the Western tradition to other countries in which some kind of "liberal learning" developed, there is China, perhaps the most stable of the great civilizations, yet it was no changeless world, either. Confucius and Mencius too, as educators, faced a revolutionary situation.

The point, of course, is that "liberal learning" has always been conscious of change yet at its best has responded to it without being swept away by it. In the midst of the historical flux, it has tried to preserve what was least mutable and most universal in learning as a core around which new experience and new insights could be ordered and passed on. Mark Van Doren says, concerning the education of the young man: "His job is not to understand whatever world may flash by at the moment; it is to get himself ready for any human world at all."[2] This may seem to belittle change, but still the humane learning Van Doren reaffirms is grounded in a fundamental truth: that there is an inescapable tension between permanence and change in our lives that cannot be overcome by simply cutting ourselves adrift from the past.

Often, it seems to me, the advocates of greater world awareness often fail to reckon with this problem in its real depth. They make little allowance for the need to have deep roots in the past if one is to cope with the sudden, bewildering complexity of the present. Slowness to reform they see as motivated simply by a desire to preserve the status quo in education or to defend traditional departmental interests. Western learning, they think, has been too content with itself. Our scholars and teachers have been parochial, smug, and resistant to change.[3]

There is truth in this, but it is difficult to judge how much. We have no universal scale by which to measure our deficiencies against those

of others, and we may be myopic in viewing our own myopia. If our knowledge of Asia, for instance, has been found wanting, so too has the Asian peoples' knowledge of one another. If one argues that their ignorance reflects only the limitations of a Western-oriented education forced upon them in the contest for survival, one must nevertheless allow that the Asians' seeming self-satisfaction or preoccupation with their own cultures reflected inherent limits in their environment that gave domestic needs priority over foreign ventures. Japan, and then only fitfully in its past, serves as perhaps the one exception to Jacques Barzun's claim for Western civilization that "it is the only civilization which has had an unlimited curiosity about other civilizations."[4]

Properly viewed, the great postwar upsurge of interest in other languages and cultures is a further extension of this unlimited curiosity, now that we have more means and opportunities to satisfy it. It represents especially the incorporation into the educational sphere of a type of learning that has ripened enough in the minds of scholars and thinkers so that the seeds may be more widely sown. We may be aware of the great lengths to which that dissemination must go to be truly effective, and we may look forward to advances in learning that will make our past gains seem insignificant, but progress will be surer if based more on respect for what has been accomplished than on contempt for what has not.

Consequently, in approaching our problem today, we will accept it as a challenge not to our past but to us in the present. We will recognize it as a unique opportunity for our educational system today, without justifying this new departure on the dubious ground that Western learning has been too narrow and self-centered until now. And we will regret that a book so laudable in its aims, so reasonable in its recommendations as *The College and World Affairs* should yield to the current compulsion to deprecate the past in order to enhance the present opportunity. It regrets that before 1945 so little had been done to "escape from the historical confines of Western culture":

> There was little change . . . in the general concept of the liberal arts. As late as 1943 Mark Van Doren could write a book on liberal education that neither took into consideration its application to cultures other than those of the West, nor sought new

> meanings in those cultures. Alfred North Whitehead also confined himself to the traditional West when he wrote on education in 1929 (although he did mention Chinese as a preferred language for study), even as he discussed in the same volume the educational implications of "Space, Time, and Relativity."[5]

Admittedly, this problem has not been dealt with directly by Van Doren or Whitehead, but their writings as a whole do show an acquaintance with what lies outside the Western tradition and an appreciation of its significance to their own studies.[6] If they have not chosen to discuss the so-called non-West as a separate problem in liberal education, it is perhaps from a disinclination to dichotomize their subjects in this way. But who yet has said anything more fundamental about the problem than Van Doren when discussing the role of imagination in liberal education? Since this passage may have escaped his critics, permit me to cite it:

> Imagination always has work to do, whether in single minds or in the general will. It is the guardian angel of desire and decision, accounting for more right action, and for more wrong action, than anybody computes. Without it, for instance, the West can come to no conclusions about the East, which war and fate are rapidly making a necessary object of its knowledge. Statistics and surveys of the East will not produce what an image can produce: an image of difference, so that no gross offenses are committed against the human fact of strangeness, and an image of similarity, even of identity, so that nothing homely is forgotten. The capacity for such images comes finally with intellectual and moral virtue; it is not the matter of luck that some suppose it, though single imaginations of great power are pieces of luck that civilization is sometimes favored with. It is a matter of training, of the tempered and prepared character which all educated persons can share. This character is a condition for the solution of any huge problem, either in the relations of peoples—and such relations, beginning at home, call first for knowledge of self, so that in the centuries to come it will be as important for the West to know itself as to know the East, which means to know itself

> better than education now encourages it to do—or in the ranges of pure speculation.[7]

Along with Van Doren and Whitehead, there are many other poets and philosophers whose work was affected by acquaintance with the Oriental world well before the postwar boom of Oriental studies. Besides Pound, whose passion for Confucius is well known, there is Paul Claudel, who encountered Zen years ahead of the Beats, and T. S. Eliot, who plunged early into the study of India and Buddhism (though it only produced, he says, "enlightened mystification"). And besides Whitehead, there are among philosophers of this century Bertrand Russell, who wrote *The Problem of China* after visiting there; John Dewey, whose personal encounter with young China reflected his consciousness of it as a world-regional rather than an East/West problem; and William Ernest Hocking, philosophically as much at home in China as in New England—to say nothing of others reaching back to William James, Thoreau, Emerson, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Leibniz, or, among writers, to Yeats, Tolstoy, Wordsworth, and many more. A dialogue with the East has been going on for centuries, since the Jesuits first introduced the learning of India and China to Europe while at the same time bringing Western learning to Asia. And today it serves poorly to advance this dialogue if we imply that little has been gained by it so far.

This is why I cannot join in scolding the West, though it has become almost a ritual introit to all praise of "non-Western studies," as in this opening to *Non-Western Studies in the Liberal Arts College*:

> Until quite lately higher education in the United States of America has been almost completely under the sway of an illusion shared by nearly everybody of European descent since the Middle Ages—the illusion that the history of the world is the history of Europe and its cultural offshoots; that Western experience is the sum total of human experience; that Western interpretations of that experience are sufficient, if not exhaustive; and that the resulting value systems embrace everything that matters.[8]

In my estimation, such sweeping accusations only obscure the real issues. In the first place, the educational picture, if it ever was that

black, is certainly more mixed today. Among the social sciences, some, like anthropology and political science, have been quick to reexamine basic premises and methodologies in the light of foreign-area studies; others, like economics, have been notoriously resistant. In large areas of the South and Midwest, there are now more voices raised in behalf of Asian studies; in other sections, the interest in language and area studies is lively and intense. The curiosity of educators, teachers, and students and their desire to do more is limited only by the available means. Financial help and professional guidance are what they need; encouragement and support, not prodding and preaching.

In the second place, to indict the Western academic tradition will get us nowhere. We must rather show how a world outlook is rooted in and deeply relevant to the traditional concerns of liberal learning. Superficially, one might expect the humanities to be the stronghold of Western classicism and traditionalism, whose defense mechanisms would have to be broken down before a broader, more progressive position could be established. Yet at Columbia, a pioneering movement for Oriental studies in the core curriculum was spearheaded by professors of French, English, philosophy, and American history (without an "Orientalist" on the committee). The first Oriental humanities course was launched jointly by a professor of Greek and Latin (Moses Hadas) and a political scientist (Herbert Deane). Their standpoint was not progressive or iconoclastic but liberal and humane.

And this attitude of mind seems to me crucial. If we have failed at all in our efforts to broaden the scope of education, I suspect that the fault lies less with teachers and scholars in the past—the "dreamy" poet whose thoughts were perhaps off with Du Fu in China, the philosopher whose "ivory tower" may actually have afforded a glimpse of Al Ghazali and Sankara, the philologist whose absent mind was probably fixed on a difficult Sanskrit text—and more with the "practical" men of our own society—on foundation boards, in congressional committees, and even in our highest political offices—who have often disbursed vast sums in the field of international studies and cultural exchange without educating themselves to the task. It is not that they have lacked experience in international affairs or sometimes even training in specific areas like Asia and Africa. They are handicapped just as much by ignorance of the West, of their own liberal traditions, and of a

liberal learning about the East that is already ours. Hence, our problem in respect to broadening the scope of liberal education is complicated by the continuing failure of many college graduates to receive any kind of liberal education at all, Western or "non-Western."

I shall not cite here cases of foundation preoccupation with contemporary problems, of fellowship applicants who have had to contrive justifications for classical research in terms of "contemporary relevance," of governmental support for language study in the interests of "national defense." "Everyone knows," says Arthur Wright in his contribution to the *Report of the Commission on the Humanities*, "it is easy to persuade the board to give $950,000 to young economists working over the meager data on China's present economy, difficult to get $120,000 for a seven-year project in the humanities (here pre-modern history) involving all the senior Chinese scholars in the country."[9]

We need not deprecate what has been accomplished in current research on Communist China—the scholarly world is less ignorant of conditions there than some would have us believe—in order to demonstrate the futility of a policy that is completely preoccupied with the contemporary scene and the supposedly quantifiable factors in it.[10] Wolf Ladejinsky, one of our most experienced economic advisers in the Far East, years ago indicated that the economic problem in Vietnam could be solved yet everything lost through ineptitude in dealing with the human factors. Today, South Vietnam's economy thrives, and the country is near collapse. Americans, having poured millions into economic and military aid, are stupefied at what is happening and totally unprepared to cope with it. Why? Because no one bothered to find out what was going on in the minds of the Vietnamese people; no one was trained to analyze the religious factors in the situation. You cannot acquire an understanding of Buddhism in a few days, as the ineptitude of our journalistic efforts shows. But do we have to wait until Buddhists are rioting in the streets to realize that the traditional religions of Asia are important fields of study? And without such study, how is one to judge what kind of "Buddhists" they are, when so many of their violent acts are inconsistent with Buddhism? Thus we fail even in the handling of current problems if we lack insight into the minds and hearts of these people, into the political uses that are made of traditional beliefs, into long-term trends that alone give current data meaning and predictive value.

What a tragedy, then, that our newest multi-million-dollar foundation efforts should continue the same sterile policy, only on a grander scale, of promoting more contemporary research that will speculate over the same "meager data" and probably be out of date or irrelevant next week!

It is some consolation that the superficiality of thought around the concentrations of educational power and money is, to some degree, offset by the growing number of able men who serve as skillful mediators between scholarship and the bureaucracy, public and private. In not a few cases they have stretched the letter of an unreasonable law to provide for legitimate needs or interpreted short-sighted policies to allow for far-sighted projects. But we have to look beyond our immediate frustrations and minor successes to a long-range goal that will direct our hitherto confused efforts.

That goal I have identified as "education for a world community." I put it this way because "education for world affairs" suggests the same preoccupation with the current world scene, of which we have grown wary. Research and reporting on the international situation is indeed essential in government, business, and our democracy for all educated people participating in it. But the first essential is to have educated people. They must be educated to live, to be truly themselves, in a world community. They must undergo the kind of intellectual chastening that is prerequisite to the exercise of any power or influence in the world. They must know themselves better than they know world affairs so that the responsibilities they assume are commensurate with their capabilities and not swollen with self-conceit—personal, national, racial, religious, social, political, and so on. Confucius and his teaching were strongly oriented to public service, to world affairs, yet he had to reconcile himself to serving *out* of office. Finding it impossible to engage in the politics of his time and remain true to himself, he chose the latter. We must know how to be like that.

I say "education for a world community" because, next to self-understanding, the emphasis in education should be on the bonds uniting men in a true community—not the passing world scene, but what men have most deeply in common as a basis for coming together. This is where imagination, as Van Doren says, has work to do, in helping us do justice to one another, in respecting similarities and differences among

men. Increasingly, our education must be formed by such an image and such a vision. And this is why I prefer "vision" to "strategy."[11] "Strategy" seems to imply that the objective is clear enough if only the forces can be mobilized and marshaled to take it. It takes the end for granted and concentrates on the means, whereas much thinking remains to be done about both: our end—the world community—and the means of attainment that must be proportionate to it. What we have now is not in fact a clear goal but only a sense of direction or, better, a sense of being attracted by a vision that we cannot fully make out and measure because it is growing with us.

For similar reasons, I would avoid the expression "non-Western studies." The disadvantages of this term have been discussed most recently in the report of the Commission on International Understanding, but the authors, like many others, resort to it for want of any other term that will cover the same ground—all of the neglected areas in our studies. Some of these areas, however, are as Western as we (Latin America), and for those that are not, "non-Western" sets us off in the wrong direction to find and place them in our educational system. It tends to perpetuate whatever isolationism or parochialism we have suffered from by suggesting that the significance of other civilizations lies primarily in their difference from European and North American civilization. It confirms the arbitrary separation of the world into Western and non-Western categories and therefore is divisive rather than constructive of the new sense of community that must be the basis and aim of our education. And finally, it does violence to the individual members of that community. As I have said elsewhere,

> the seeming impartiality with which so many civilizations are thus equated (actually negated) tends to obscure the true proportions of their respective contributions. The positive significance of Asia in particular tends to be obscured when it is simply lumped together with other areas equally different from the modern West, which by implication becomes the norm for all.[12]

As used and popularized by Vera Micheles Dean, "non-Western" signified those societies that were underdeveloped and alike in their need to modernize quickly. Since, from this standpoint, their common

problem was to catch up with the advanced industrial states of Western Europe and North America, the latter obviously provided the norm or yardstick to which the underdeveloped societies would be expected to measure up, hopefully by telescoping centuries of "Western" growth into decades of non-Western forced development. No doubt this distinction served to emphasize a major problem on the contemporary scene and recommend itself to students of current world affairs. But for purposes of liberal education, a longer view and wider perspective are needed. If we are not to conceive of the new world community as homogeneous with our own megalopolis, then we must arrive at a better understanding of what these other civilizations represent in themselves and what potentially they could bring into the new community that, at this early stage, it is not yet conscious of.

I realize that no one who has grown accustomed to using "non-Western" for a host of nations and a variety of sins will consider anything like "the new world community" a convenient substitute. For practical purposes, it will be satisfactory to use "language and area studies," "regional studies," or "international studies" as a general category, representing this new community in its diversity. Such divisions or subdivisions as "Asian studies," "African studies," "Russian studies," or "East European studies" will adequately represent it in its particularity, standing for basic geographical or cultural units of more than current topical interest, which should retain their distinctive identity and significance even in the community of the future. For some, the name "Oriental studies" may be ruled out as too old-fashioned, musty with the odor of classical archeology and philology in the Near East, or considered guilty by association with such bigotry as found expression in the Oriental Exclusion Act. From a genuine scholarly viewpoint, however, this term has traditionally given recognition to the major civilizations of Asia as worthy fields of study and as generous contributors to Western culture. Such an intrinsically positive concept should not, in any case, be sacrificed to the negative and dubiously new-fashioned "non-Western" label.

Liberal education consists of any study that liberates man for a better life. Thus it is broad and inclusive but also involves a process of growth and maturation, implying distinctions of order and priority. It liberates man by giving him, first of all, power over himself, and

only then perhaps power over things and over others. By disciplining his faculties, it frees them for constructive use. The arts of language, for instance, are among the most fundamental of such disciplines, so recognized in both classical and modern education. There is almost no level on which they cannot make their contribution. And the learning of foreign languages is, among these arts, one that will contribute most to the building of a new world community because it is the most genuine compliment that a man can pay to another people and their culture. That he should put himself to the trouble of learning another's language, that he should subject himself to the discipline of study, and often of monotonous drill, is immediate evidence of a man's readiness to humble himself, to put himself, so to speak, at another's disposal, in order that he may enter into genuine communication with him. Understanding others makes that much difference to him.

Still, foreign language study is only one of the language arts so indispensable to civilization. To learn well one's own language and literature—in the broadest sense—is hard enough and must retain some priority. Most of us recognize the folly of "collecting languages" when none of them is learned well, and learning well (that is, to the point of reading and enjoying a foreign literature) is all the more unlikely if one's powers of appreciation and discrimination have not been nourished at home before they are called upon for service abroad. No doubt the language-learning capabilities of most young Americans are far from overtaxed, and more yet can be demanded of them in both secondary and higher education. Nevertheless, the polyglot cannot be our educational ideal. Overemphasis on foreign languages can stunt intellectual growth in other directions. It is futile if we learn to speak in several languages but end up with nothing to say. The gift of tongues will do little to grace a shallow mind.

Thus, most of the work of college education will remain to be done in English, and this applies to the study of foreign areas as well as to any other. I have been dismayed at the number of cases in which small liberal arts colleges have held off doing anything about Asian studies until they could offer one or more of the languages involved. No such program would be respectable, they thought, unless it were based on language study. Yet for the number of students who might take Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, or Arabic with the expectation of pursuing them

to real fluency, this would be an uneconomical arrangement, an exotic frill. As a consequence, they have done nothing. Procrastination has been justified on grounds of academic respectability, abetted by a simple misconception as to educational priorities.

Language study is ultimately important for any student ready to commit himself seriously to area training. It is not essential, however, for a liberal education, and even for the college major its unavailability does not preclude substantial accomplishment. We need not choose between all or nothing. Enough scholarly research and translation has been done already so that enormous advances can be made in dispelling the ordinary student's ignorance of Asia without exhausting the material in Western languages. Yet where resources permit, our educational system should have a place and a proper sequence for both general study in the medium of Western languages and specialized studies in other foreign languages. Experience has shown, moreover, that the greater the diffusion of this general knowledge and the more energetic the college in providing introductory courses, the more spontaneous and irrepressible is the demand generated for the addition of language instruction. It is at this stage that an effort should be made to launch language study in at least one area that would provide an opportunity for specialization.

This natural sequence in the development of the college curriculum also corresponds to the natural order in which students should get their exposure to other areas and cultures, moving from general education to special training. Language study need not necessarily be preceded by a general introduction to the area, but such an introduction should be available to all students—including the great majority who will never take up language study—during the early years of college. Its primary purpose should be to form an integral part of their liberal education, and as a secondary purpose it should expose an increasing number of students to the possibilities for specialization in time to make a decent start on the language.

The manner in which foreign areas are represented in undergraduate education will vary according to the college. In principle, we should encourage a plurality of methods, recognizing the diversity of needs, purposes, and capabilities. There is just one condition I would set. We must be prepared to justify any innovation in terms of the established

curriculum and stated educational aims of our colleges. This might seem no more than obvious, but I am convinced that it is widely ignored or evaded. With the increasing mobility of both teachers and students, facilitated by liberality in granting leaves, canceling courses, and adjusting requirements in favor of study abroad, there seems to be less and less conception of the college program as an integrated learning experience. Not that there is lack of respect for the "integrity" of the curriculum—the traditional piety is still there—but fewer people have any idea of what it is.

In such circumstances, those who advocate an increasing role for language and area studies all too often rely on convenient but essentially irrelevant arguments on behalf of their proposals. An eloquent appeal is backed up by no more substantial argument than the popularity of our new courses among students or some vague assertion about the educational wave of the future. While statistical surveys of rising enrollment in language and area programs around the country may suggest to a curriculum committee that it give serious thought to what should be done in this direction, they do not render "any argument about whether such studies fit into the curriculum . . . purely academic."[13] Or if they do, we must understand "purely academic" in the legitimate rather than the pejorative sense of the term.

The nature of courses offered to students should properly be determined by the subject matter and the requirements of the disciplines pertaining thereto. Whether courses so defined fit into a planned curriculum must then be decided in relation to the college's conception of itself. If it has no such idea of what it is about, the real need of that college is to become more conscious of itself before it talks about greater "awareness" of the other half of the world. Most particularly, this applies to core courses that will have to transcend departmental boundaries in order to serve their purpose. They must have some higher justification than the mere assertion of one department's interests or popularity over against another.

Opportunism, I concede, may gain momentary redress from an imbalance that has long worked to the detriment of education for a world community. We must seize our chances where we find them. But these occasions also should find us ready to explain and justify our goals in relation to the aims of undergraduate education—in terms

meaningful to those outside our own area and discipline. In the long run, unless our purposes can be constantly exposed and upheld before the college community as a whole, our gains will be insecure.

Is it unrealistic or visionary to suggest that such discussion can be conducted within a college faculty or curriculum committee in terms meaningful to all? Admittedly, many of our colleagues are still strangers to the world of which we speak. For this very reason, however, we should welcome any opportunity for discussion or debate as a means of educating and informing them. And welcome it at the same time as a means of educating ourselves. For without an appreciation of their curricular aims and choices, we cannot adjust and refine our own. Without this we, too, run the risk of becoming parochial and self-serving.

For instance, if at Columbia I know that there is no room in the basic (Western) humanities course for such philosophers as Plotinus and Pascal, it will affect my judgment as to how many and which Oriental philosophers I shall try to make room for in the Asian Humanities course. How can I claim that any college graduate ought to have read Sankara and Ramanuja if he has not read these others? If there is time enough only for the *Iliad* but not the *Odyssey*, for Milton but not Chaucer, for *Lear* and *The Tempest* but not *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*—can I ask students to read works of Oriental literature, however important in their own traditions, that do not measure up to some more universal standard? When the *Psalms*, the *City of God*, Dante's *Paradiso*, St. John of the Cross, and Kierkegaard find no place on the Western list, how many Vedic hymns, Sufi poets, or Buddhist mystics can I include in the Asian "must" list? And, coming out of the classical world into the modern, if, in the light of all that crowds in upon the lower college program, my colleagues in charge of the core curriculum have decided not to insist upon each student's receiving a basic introduction to, say, the economic problems of American society, what right have I to insist that the same student should acquaint himself with the economic problems of so-called underdeveloped countries?

On questions such as these, we are constantly forced to make practical judgments, even though we possess no final answers to many of them. In one sense, the works and writers I have cited are not truly comparable. They have a claim on our attention precisely because of their standing in their own traditions rather than because their

universality can be immediately recognized or their stature fully gauged. In other words, the traditions of which they are an expression can be better understood as complementary to our own than as comparable. From this standpoint, we can only teach as much of all of them as is possible, knowing that it will never be enough.

Nevertheless, our practical choices ought to reflect some overall view of the curriculum, and from this standpoint our judgments of what should be taught about other civilizations must take into account what is taught of our own. If we ask for reexamination and readjustment of the traditional curriculum, we should be prepared to reciprocate. From a continuing faculty discussion on this basis, great mutual benefits would flow. There is no better way to promote the gradual integration that should overcome the opposition between "West" and "non-West" and generate from within the college community the new educational consciousness appropriate to a world community. More to the point here, it will help us define the relationship between education for world citizenship and specialized language and area study for the advancement of learning.

We face at least two basic problems: How much of the world can we hope to embrace in a core curriculum? And how far can we press for specialized language study in college without sacrificing other essential ingredients of a liberal education?

One approach to the first problem is to provide introductory courses to different areas or civilizations and give the student his choice. The minimum requirement then would be only that his program should include at least some exposure to another culture or another society. This will give him a different perspective on his own way of life and open his eyes to new possibilities. But a more concentrated exposure to one civilization will usually be gained at the expense of exposure to any others. In a college without the resources to offer a wider range of choice, nothing will have been lost. In better circumstances, however, some familiarity with still another civilization should provide a triangulation point for the comparisons a student tends to make between the "other" civilization and his own.

Thus arises a second approach: a survey covering several areas or civilizations in a single course.[14] Whether these civilizations are introduced singly or in combination, a judgment must still be made as to

which areas or civilizations have the first claim on our attention. Teaching and library resources are rarely sufficient to deal with all continents and countries, nor is the time available to the student. For this reason, again, a distinction is useful between a core curriculum and specialized training. Some civilizations merit consideration because we realize, if only imperfectly, that their achievements and experiences are no less significant than those of Western civilization. These should be represented in the core. Others simply have not attained that distinction. As problem areas in the modern world they cannot be ignored, but it will suffice if they are offered only for some students to investigate and not for all.

I have already identified four major Asian civilizations—Islamic, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese—as meriting inclusion in the first group and have explained that

> to assign a higher priority . . . to the major Asian civilizations is justified by the greater richness and depth of their traditions, by the historical contributions to and influence upon other peoples beyond their own borders, and by the impressive continuity and stability of their traditional institutions down through the ages. It is little wonder that the natural interest of Westerners today should spontaneously incline them to learn about Asia, for here are the peoples whose technological "underdevelopment" can never be mistaken for immaturity of culture or society. Their social experience—their population problems, their political institutions, their economic dilemmas—in many ways anticipate those of the modern West. Their arts, literature, philosophy and religion in some respects achieved a refinement surpassing our own.
>
> To focus, then, on Asian civilizations in a core curriculum is only to signify that there is more than enough matter here worthy of the student's attention and reflection, on a level with and as challenging for him as that which he encounters in Western civilization. Global scope—with Russia, Africa, South America, and what not thrown in—need not be the criterion, when to discover any one of the major Asian civilizations is virtually to discover a whole new world, and two or three of them a new universe.[15]

On this basis, we are entitled to ask that an introduction to at least some of these civilizations be offered in the early years of college. The second year seems a good one in which to begin, assuming that the first is taken up with a basic introduction to Western history, thought, and literature (that is, so far as the humanities are concerned). It is not that Western civilization should always have priority, but it must *for us*. We are Americans and start from there—or we make a false start. For Indians and Japanese, the priorities will be different. Nothing I have said about citizenship in the world community can change that. This latter goal may give us some common direction in the future, but it does not erase our past.

Considering this basic fact of our lives and the distinctive character of the major civilizations, I question whether an omnibus course in world civilization or world literature could do justice to its individual parts. A well-thought-out sequence over at least two years might perhaps do it, but tacking Mao Zedong and Nehru on to the modern end of a contemporary civilization course or just adding the *Analects* and the *Tale of Genji* to the Hundred Great Books will not.

Another conclusion I draw from this basic fact is that study of the more remote and difficult languages should not take priority over the Western languages traditionally emphasized in our colleges and universities. If a knowledge of French or German, and sometimes Latin or Greek, has been thought essential to liberal education in the West, our new situation should not tempt us to substitute, for example, Chinese or Japanese. We can only aim at their addition beyond the normal requirements for those students whose aptitude and industry enable them to undertake more. Both types of language study qualify as liberal disciplines, but the former serve a double purpose. They are more intimately related to our own language and involved in our own culture, which means that they can help us understand our own past. The latter do this, if at all, only reflexively.

Here some may feel that I am showing altogether too much respect for tradition. At this rate, we will never move out of our own backyard. The curriculum will be so weighted down with Western baggage that few students will get the chance to specialize in a foreign language and area with hopes of achieving real competence. After two years devoted entirely to a core curriculum and fulfilling other basic requirements,

how can the student squeeze in the minimum three years of language study needed for his or her field of specialization? Moreover, since this "field" means not just an area but also a standard discipline that he or she can bring to bear on that area, how can he or she further squeeze in the basic methodology of that discipline?

We are indeed in a tight spot, but rescue may not be impossible if help comes from enough different directions. One of these is the improvement of language teaching so that acceleration relieves the threatened congestion. We must hope that the satisfaction of Western-language requirements can be accomplished largely on the basis of secondary-school study. We may look forward even to some high school students coming into college with at least an introductory knowledge of Russian or Chinese, so that rapid advancement in specialization need not be at the expense of the core curriculum. We have the means also, through intensive summer study supported by NDEA, almost to double the amount of language learning possible in the last two years of college.

Thus the language problem is far from hopeless, but what about area specialization? I can be optimistic about this only if we reconsider the conventional components of an area-studies major. It is unrealistic to think that, in his junior and senior years, the student can both ground himself in a given discipline such as history, anthropology, government, or economics and also follow an interdisciplinary program that covers his area from every angle. Compelled to opt for one or the other, we can only choose the former. We must be satisfied if on graduation from college the student has received a general introduction to the area, a basic discipline that he can work in, and a command of the language appropriate to his discipline. A more comprehensive knowledge of the area will have to wait, either upon practical experience in the field or upon an interdisciplinary regional studies program at the M.A. level.

Exceptions must be allowed for, and one of them is the college that cannot afford the appropriate language instruction but happens to have a group of area specialists in established departments who can staff a respectable interdisciplinary program. Assuming, however, that aid will be forthcoming for more liberal arts colleges to launch programs in uncommon languages, the desirability of starting difficult languages early would give them priority over area study.

What we end up with is a sequence that looks something like this:

1. A core curriculum in the lower college, with an introduction to the major Asian civilizations and humanities for *all* students—following the basic Western courses in the second year (or where necessary the third).
2. A major in the upper college emphasizing:
   a. language study begun as early as the student's preparation for college allows, without sacrificing some Western language competence, and using summers for intensive study;
   b. initiation into the basic methodology of a discipline or profession;
   c. application of language and discipline to seminar research in the senior year.
3. An interdisciplinary area study program at the M.A. level *or* travel, study, and practical experience in the area. Both will be necessary for most students who look forward to careers as area specialists.
4. Ph.D. work in a given discipline, with all the skills and experience gained thus far brought to focus on a specific topic of research.

In this scheme, travel and study abroad would, for most students, be substituted for intensive language work in summer school or come naturally just after graduation from college. Only those who have fulfilled all other requirements and accomplished at least two years of fairly intensive language study as freshmen and sophomores should be allowed to spend their junior year abroad because only students this serious and determined will benefit from it. Otherwise, it seems unjustifiable to break up a four-year program carefully designed, balanced, and pruned to provide a true liberal education. The values of such a program derive only from planning and persistent application. Travel, though a valuable experience, is not educational in the same way. It should be considered a reward for disciplined study, not a substitute. Or it should be considered a supplement to the language program, providing a summer's intensive conversational practice.

Unless the "global centers" so much promoted today can satisfy these same needs and requirements, they should be considered more

in the category of summer excursion than as serving the purposes of a more integrated curriculum.

My discussion so far has been within the context of the established curriculum in American colleges. If there were time, I should have liked to consider the possibility that our conception of liberal education itself may be enlarged and enriched by knowledge of other teaching traditions. For instance, in China, Japan, and Korea it was always considered a mark of the educated man, the humane man, that he was capable of composing poetry on the significant occasions of life and of rendering it in calligraphy that was a true expression of his character and personality. The reading of poetry is still a part of our college education, but how many of us have expressed ourselves in it since leaving fifth or sixth grade? To some G.I.'s in the Pacific, for a defeated Japanese general to spend his last moments writing a final poem seemed a somewhat silly ritual. But in this respect, did not the general show his superiority over his conquerors? We shall mourn the passing of poet-generals like Lord Wavell and General Yamagata as war becomes more and more of a specialized business of destruction and as we lose the creative touch that ennobled even this most inhumane of human occupations. In the rush and din of modernization, such humane traditions are fast disappearing even in the East. As we move into the world community, to save and preserve them becomes our responsibility. This will require not merely a sense of appreciation but an effort at creation.

I have given an illustration of only one among many forms of training—physical, artistic, and spiritual, as well as intellectual—that in the East have been thought both to liberate and civilize the individual. A few of them are peculiarly "Oriental," but some of them, like poetry, are not. A continuing encounter with Eastern forms of learning may help us to rediscover and possibly revive some of our own classical arts and spiritual traditions. Whether anything can be done to restore them in the liberal education of the future is a question. The advancing pressures and demands of modern life have long since put them to flight, and the resulting wasteland may not attract their return. On the other hand, we are aware of a profound unrest among our students, a resistance to these pressures for uniformity and conformity, and a spirit of revolt against the "establishment" that can undermine the finest curriculum and the most expert teaching. We face the paradox that

the "deeper spirit" of our times is a deeply troubled spirit rather than one serenely flowing beneath the agitated surface. Compulsory chapel and assembly are gone, only to be replaced by the compulsion to seek a meaning for life somewhere off campus. An unnamed restlessness impels students to march or ride instead of sit, read, and think. The situation may be better in some places, worse in others, but no one can deny the strong, worldwide undercurrent. And in these circumstances, our established curriculum cannot achieve fully even its own purposes.

Salvador de Madariaga says of Europe that its destiny

> was never more clearly defined than in our day. The twofold message which she incarnates is fast being forgotten. Both the freedom of the mind for which Socrates died and the divine spark within the humblest man for which Christ died are in danger today. The Factory State is fast developing, reducing man to the level of a computer. Quantity is driving quality to the wall. And if Europe does not unite to save quality and the individual, both will perish.[16]

When we come to realize it, however, the same concern is expressed in only slightly different terms by spokesmen for every major tradition today. Madariaga's problem is not just Europe's but the world's. That is why a solution can be found only in the context of a world community that respects the dignity and destiny of each civilization.

That is why, too, our study of our neighbors in this community must approach them on a human level rather than on a mechanical level. The reason our foreign policy has lacked dynamism and our foreign aid has been abortive is that they have dealt with people largely in a mechanical way, with no regard for the human spirit living and working in them. Though we think of ourselves as always wishing to help others and always ready to make sacrifices for them, our goodwill and generosity do not touch the hearts of others as long as it is expressed only in dollars and cents, howitzers and helicopters. Some deeper bond, some more vital basis, must be found for the community we hope to form with them. And this can be done only if we are reeducated for the task. But it will not be done until the officials responsible in government, the foundations, and the schools are ready to support work in

the humanities—Eastern and Western—on something like the scale of the physical and social sciences.

There is urgency to this now. We have squandered our opportunities and now find the times unreceptive to our noblest aims. Though technologically the world is coming together, in other respects the barriers to genuine communication are rising. In Europe as well as in Asia and Africa, the trend toward nationalism, sectarianism, and communalism militates against the international community. We can anticipate that our vision of a world community may appear anachronistic in the days immediately ahead—a mere echo of the time when we fought "to make the world safe for democracy." We must expect to be haunted by our failures in the past. And still, we must see beyond all this.

The West need not repudiate itself in order to redeem its position in the world. It needs to know itself better, as well as others. It needs to emulate the pioneering work of its scholars and thinkers, who helped prepare us for this day, while it also heeds the voices of other peoples unheard till now. The great force of Western expansionism has spent itself, but we should not forget that with the Wellesleys into India went Sir William Jones, who led the revival of Sanskrit studies; that from the East India Company's trade in India and China came not only unprecedented profits but the first social sciences spanning East and West; that missionaries dedicated to the propagation of their own faith, like James Legge, Timothy Richard, Seraphim Couvreur, and Karl Reichelt, were devoted enough to truth and the peoples among whom they worked to labor for a better understanding of Confucian and Buddhist teachings.

We suffer justly and inevitably for the sins of imperialism and colonialism, even though the specific charges against us are often distorted because their aim is retaliation or revenge, not justice. But we are false to ourselves if we forswear our inheritance not because it is untainted but because we cannot wash our hands of it without forsaking the obligations it imposes. That obligation is to go out into the world, bringing forward all that is good from the past, as the basis for a new understanding, a new world community in which all peoples will contribute to the building. Earlier generations may have misconceived the task or misjudged the degree of self-denial that leadership of such a world order would entail. Great ideals often invite great self-deception. But the challenge of building such a world order is not one that we can

decline any more than they could. The world will be ordered now, for better or worse. It will be for better if the education we now plan is education for a world community, education that has learned lessons from the past—that is, everyone's past, which we share by virtue of our common present and future. That will be the kind of liberal learning Confucius talked about: "Even when walking in a party of no more than three, I can always be learning from those I am with. There will be good qualities that I can select for imitation and bad ones that will teach me what requires correction in myself."[17]

2

"Starting on the Road" with John Erskine & Co.

The beginning of what would become Columbia's Core Curriculum lies in the World War I era, when two courses were started that soon became the heart of the Columbia College program later known as the "Core." One of these was the prewar General Honors course of John Erskine (1879–1951), which sought to conserve the values of classical liberal education in the face of the growing trend toward specialization in the research university. Along with this latter trend came the threat to classical learning that arose from the abandonment by the college of the requirement for Latin and Greek, the languages in which most of the classics had been read.

Erskine argued that the most essential values of the ancient classics could be conveyed in translation. If modern laymen could feel comfortable reading the Bible in English, the same could be done for other classic works. Indeed, translations into the vernacular had the advantage of bringing the classics within reach of laymen in general rather than preserving them as the special province of classical scholars.

Such an understanding was implicit in the title of Erskine's pioneering course: General Honors. As an experimental venture it was offered first as a challenge to a select group of promising students—who were attracted to it as a special honors course. At the same time, it had a new and democratic appeal for them in its aim to reach the generally educated person or layman. In these features of the original course lay the germs of what would later become spoken of as "general education."

The central focus and subject matter of this course, however, was the classics. These were texts that had proven themselves capable of speaking to generations of humankind in terms that could still be meaningful to their own life and times, reaching into their own hearts and touching them personally.

This was how the texts were to be read—in the raw, directly, and not mediated too much by scholarly introduction or commentary. No doubt, such a reading could result in somewhat different personal understandings, and to deal with these differences—as a no less essential part of Erskine's next step on the road—was the method of engaging in small group discussions, led by a pair of teachers who could help students to articulate, share, and compare with others their own reading of the texts.

Among academics, Erskine was unusual in being a creative artist himself: a notable poet, musician, novelist, and playwright. To him, a classic text was a great work of art not only in its literary perfection but in its appeal to the heart, the senses, and the aesthetic imagination. It was not just an object for the exercise of critical reason and analysis. In this respect, he resisted the increasing enshrinement of "critical thinking" as the be all and end all of learning, which could only result in a narrowing and impoverishment of the self, unless it included sympathetic appreciation and synthesis as well as critical analysis.

In the printed syllabus for the course (which would serve as the syllabus for its direct successor, the "Colloquium"), Erskine entitled his preface "The Enjoyment of Reading the Classics," which expressed the essential features of this learning experience in these terms:

> Just before the United States entered the World War, a course of reading for Juniors and Seniors in world masterpieces of literature was proposed in the faculty of Columbia College. The

plan lapsed during the next two years, but when the College re-organized itself in 1919, the so-called Honors Course was inaugurated—a system of weekly meetings in small groups of students, each group presided over by two or more members of the faculty, for the purpose of discussing some great book in the field of history, philosophy, economics, science, or literature. The ideas underlying the course were simple. It was thought that any fairly intelligent person could read with profit any book (except, of course, highly specialized science) which had once made its way to fame among general readers. Even without the introductory study which usually precedes our acquaintance with classics in these various fields, any reader, it was thought, can discover and enjoy the substance which has made such books remembered. It was thought, also, that in a weekly discussion of the reading, such an exchange of ideas as might occur in any group which had read an interesting book, would be more illuminating than a lecture. It was thought, also, that the result of such reading and discussion over a period of two years would be a rich mass of literary information, ideas and principles, even emotions.

In practice this course has been so successful that the list of readings has been somewhat expanded, and is here published in the thought that others outside of the College group might care to follow it, Any such list, however expanded, must remain somewhat arbitrary. The reader will think of many titles which to him seem to deserve a place here, or which seem more important than some of the titles here given. Undoubtedly we get a better historical approach to anything that is old if we have the time to study its environment and its associations. But in art it is not the history of a masterpiece which makes it famous so much as qualities of permanent interest. It is precisely those qualities which we recognize first when we take up an old book without prejudice, and read it as intelligently as we can, looking for what seems to concern our times. I personally would go rather far in protest against the exclusively historical approach to literature or any other art.[1]

From this we can see that Erskine's early list was not thought of as complete but as open-ended. He was not defining a fixed canon (such as

later was promoted with great fanfare as the Hundred Great Books by Mortimer Adler at the University of Chicago). But it did involve a process of induction, of constructive reasoning, from the legacy of enduring classics, as to what might be considered central concerns of human life, judging from the experience of one's forbears. It was not a fixed quantity but a process of focusing on perennial issues. In other words, though open to new experience, it was not open-ended in the sense of being open to the indefinite, indeterminate, and potentially infinite exploration of any and all possible forms of new knowledge. If such exploration should occur, quantitatively speaking, it should be accompanied by a parallel process of qualitative reflection and judgment.

The point is illustrated by what occurred when the followers of Erskine succeeded in converting his Honors course into a course required of all undergraduates, a decision of the College faculty in 1936 and first enacted in 1937. This was a signal achievement for the movement, underscoring for its proponents (as for Erskine) that the "general" part of General Honors aimed at a general audience and its active assimilation of the classics, not just a generality or diffusiveness of knowledge.

The point is underscored when one recognizes that the same followers of Erskine persisted in offering the General Honors course as a junior-senior level "Colloquium on Important Books" (known in the 1930s, 1940s, and on into the 1970s and 1980s as the "Colloquium"). Why, since they had succeeded in establishing the Humanities course as a requirement for all freshmen, was there any need for a an almost identical junior-senior colloquium—especially considering the heavy duplication in the readings?

At least one view of this seeming anomaly was that the upper-college course enabled students in the humanities to pursue this as a form of specialized study, just as other students would follow the other required course with an upper college major in one or another discipline that would serve their professional needs. Indeed, one observer of this process described it as yielding to the insistent trend toward professionalization that still exerted strong pressure on the college program. "The Colloquium represents a rather narrow scholarly enterprise: the desire to prepare would-be scholars for further study. . . . [It was] designed to provide specialized academic training of future liberal arts graduate students rather than for all students."[2]

To whatever extent this may have been so, the Colloquium continued to draw students destined for professions outside the humanities (e.g., natural sciences, medicine, and engineering), and the advocates of the Colloquium saw it otherwise than as specialized training: they thought of it as a continuing parallel to specialized study, alongside and complementary to it.

Erskine himself had emphasized that the classics were to be read and reread many times, sometimes in the company of other classics one had not had a chance to consider the first time around or even in the new contexts of expanding research. Later, the continuing reflection on classic works should be a constant accompaniment to specialized study, a core understood as central to all new learning, as an integrative function bringing old and new together.

Strong evidence for this view comes from the fact that the Colloquium was based on the same syllabus as the original General Honors course, which included Erskine's own succinct rationale for the process. Here, he especially disputed the idea that classics should only be read in historical context or with the benefit of expert commentary.

> The titles here suggested are arranged chronologically without regard to different fields of knowledge. The reading of these books will not be training in history, nor in economics, nor in literature—we should not like to imply that any subject or special field is here completely represented. But of course it is the critic, not the artist, who invents distinct fields of knowledge. In life these fields all overlap. The reading of this list consecutively would give, we believe, something better than an introduction to special fields—it would exhibit the mind of western Europe, moving for two thousand years or more through the various interests, imaginative, intellectual, scientific, and emotional, which have occupied it from century to century. Great books read simply and sensibly are an introduction to the whole life; it is the completeness of their outlook which makes them great.[3]

In the circumstances that attended publication of this syllabus in 1927, two notable features stand out. First, Erskine's preface is followed by a statement by Everett Dean Martin of the People's Institute of New

York, where teachers in the Columbia program also taught an audience made up of labor union members and other adults. Martin testified that the same course conducted for Columbia College students had

> been used by the People's Institute in various reading and discussion centers in New York City: In the present instance we were able to secure the services of a number of the faculty of Columbia University, who had given the course in that university. The experiment in taking the course off-campus and giving it to groups of average readers, led to the belief that there may be persons everywhere who would be interested in such a course in the humanities.[4]

To all of this we can easily imagine Erskine saying Amen, when he agreed to have it included in his published syllabus along with a statement by a supporting cast of scholars who readily lent their names to the enterprise, i.e. the Columbia College Colloquium, as heir to the original syllabus of General Honors, published first in 1927. The fact that it was published by the American Library Association for the use of a national audience speaks for the wide appeal just noted by Everett Dean Martin and testifies to the eagerness of many distinguished scholars to lend it their endorsement. Here is the list of signatories:

> M. J. Adler, J. B. Brebner, J. M. Barzun, R. L Carey, I. Edman, J. Erskine, J. Gutmann, M. Hadas, J. Hutton, C. W. Keyes, S. McKee Jr., R. P. McKeon, E. E. Neff, P. H. Odegard, H. Peterson, H. W. Schneider, J. Storck, L. Trilling, R. G. Tugwell, M. Van Doren, R. M. Weaver, H. T. Westbrook, A. Whitridge, P. N. Youtz.[5]

Each of these signers was a distinguished scholar in his own right, and some achieved national importance, e.g., Rexford Guy Tugwell, an economist who became a leading member of FDR's "Brain Trust"; Herbert Schneider of UNESCO; and Peter Odegaard, later president of the University of Washington. (I need not emphasize the obvious importance of Mortimer Adler and Richard P. McKeon in taking the movement to Chicago in the form of general education and the Great Books program). The continuity at Columbia was extended from

Erskine to both the Humanities course and the Colloquium on Important Books by J. B. Brebner (among those just listed), Jacques Barzun, Irwin Edman, James Gutmann, Moses Hadas, Herbert Schneider, Mark Van Doren, Raymond Weaver, and Harold Westbrook. Several of them doubled in importance as contributors to the development of the Contemporary Civilization course, as did Robert Carey. Although both CC and Humanities experienced many vicissitudes over the years, the fact that so much of what Erskine advanced when he "started on the road" endured into the twenty-first century is attributable to their persistent efforts in a long-term collegial effort.

Of the two original Core initiatives mentioned at the beginning of this essay, I have yet to say something about the origins of the second major initiative, which first appeared in the form of the Peace Issues course. Although it would eventually emerge as one of the two main components of the Columbia program, to be known as the Core, its origins are quite different from those of its counterpart, General Honors, later the Colloquium. The latter, as we have seen, was born of the growing contest between the earlier liberal education of the American college gentleman and the increasing emphasis on professional specialization in the emerging research university of the twentieth century. Peace Issues, by contrast, exploded on the Columbia campus as a direct hit from World War I, from the insistence of university leaders like President Nicholas Murray Butler and Dean Herbert Hawkes that Columbia gentlemen face their civic responsibility for supporting the Allied cause, which was variously advertised as the "War to Save [Western] Civilization" and the "War to End All Wars." The political heat and patriotic fervor at the moment was such that the College plunged into action to pursue these big questions without much resistance but with many educational issues left unaddressed.

A further accounting of these issues will be attempted in later chapters. Important to note here is that there were no preexisting answers or historic models to draw upon. A wide range of possibilities presented themselves. It was not immediately apparent that any of the classics would offer readymade solutions to the problems of war and peace. This became all the more apparent when the war ended and the issues of peace took center stage. Many of these issues were immediate and pressing, but since the war had ostensibly been fought to save

"Civilization," it did not take long for current problems to take civilizational values as a framework for discussion. It was the contemporary situation that had forced itself on the college's attention, and the terms of the discussion were therefore sought in the modern period. John Herman Randall's *Making of the Modern Mind* became a standard text for years. A further compilation of major historical documents (postmedieval) and scholarly articles, published as the syllabus of the Contemporary Civilization course, became widely used as a model for similar courses elsewhere.

Problems of staffing and pedagogy beset Contemporary Civilization from the start, and these remained, even after the adding of a second year entitled Contemporary Civilization B, which addressed immediate social, economic, and political issues in a kind of hands-on way (including local field trips). CCB did not last; ironically, it eventually fell victim to the demands for political relevance of the antiwar movement in the sixties, insisting on radical action instead of considered reflection on longer-term values.

Much more can be said about the checkered and tortuous history of Contemporary Civilization. For the present purpose, however, it may suffice to point out two salient developments over the ninety-odd years of local history as to what became of its ideas and methods as adopted and adapted elsewhere: First, Contemporary Civilization (like the Peace Issues course) was the first to become required of all College students, and insofar as its required status marked it as the essential feature of what became known as "general education," Contemporary Civilization stood as an historical landmark, whereas Humanities A, the successor to Erskine's General Honors course, only became a general requirement for all students in 1936–1937. Nevertheless, the earlier (Honors) Colloquium, with which Erskine "started on the road" in the pre–World War I era, emerged in the longer run as contributing the two most durable formulations of the essential Core Curriculum: a direct personal reading of enduring classics by each student and the discussion method ("colloquium") as superior to lectures for their shared serious engagement with perennial issues that were also "contemporary." These twin formulations may not capture all that was meant to be made available in general education, but I think they come close to pointing at the heart and practice of the Core.

3

The Great "Civilized" Conversation

A CASE IN POINT

Those familiar with the early history of the movement at Columbia identified with John Erskine's Honors Course and the "Classics of the Western World," known later in Chicago and St. John's as the "Great Books Program," will recall how its early advocates, including, among others, Mark Van Doren and Stringfellow Barr, referred to the dialogue among the great writers and thinkers as the "Great Conversation." They thought of it as the great minds speaking to one another over the centuries about the perennial issues of human life and society. Contrary to those who misperceived the process as one of handing down fixed, eternal truths, for them it was a vital process of reengaging with questions that had continued human relevance, age after age. One could not afford to ignore what had been said about those issues earlier because civilization depended on building upon the lessons of the past. Thus tradition, like civilization, continued to grow. It was cumulating and cumulative, not fixed.

Not all of the issues engaged in this conversation had to do with civilization and society—some religious issues might go beyond that—

but sustaining the conversation itself required a civilized life, a willingness to show a decent respect for what others have learned or thought for themselves, what others have valued or held dear—indeed, it was an appreciation for human life as it has been lived.

In the earlier phases of this movement, the conversation was largely within the Western tradition and was closely tied to the question of how classics, originally expressed in the classical languages of the West, especially Latin and Greek—could still survive in the modern vernacular as part of a classical education. But it was easily assumed that translation into the vernacular was possible because of a continuity of both language and culture into the later period. Such continuity in cultural values overrode historical change. As we shall see, this was largely (but not entirely) true of the major Asian traditions as well. They too had longstanding traditions of a Great Conversation, as later writers spoke to and reappropriated their own classics and thus engaged with the great minds of the past.

It was not, however, a matter simply of conserving received tradition. It was, as the word "conversation" suggests, the present speaking to the past in its own voice, actively repossessing and renewing the classics in modern terms that spoke to contemporary concerns as well. In other words, these traditions had within themselves the capacity for reexamination and self-renewal.

In modern times, this meant reflecting on the classics in a way that responded to the new cultural situation in which modern writers found themselves. As homegrown classics but also recognizably human, they became world classics. By the eighteenth century, at least, Western writers recognized that Asian traditions had classic thinkers who spoke to the same issues and concerns, though perhaps in somewhat different terms. Thus Enlightenment thinkers began to speak to the thinkers of classical China as well as to Western classics, and the New England Transcendentalists spoke also to philosophers of ancient India. Benjamin Franklin, at the founding of the American Philosophical Society, dedicated it to the study of Chinese philosophy as well as Western. All this had an effect on early twentieth-century writers such as W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and others too numerous to mention. But as of the twentieth century, though the most creative minds were already extending the Great Conversation to Asia, it had

as yet little effect on Western education at the base level. Asian classics did not become part of the Great Books program. They were not among Mortimer Adler's "Hundred Great Books," nor did his "Hundred Great Ideas" include any Asian concepts.

Another limitation on the inclusion of Asian classics in the Great Conversation as conducted in the modern West was the tendency to focus the conversation on the classic writers of the Asian traditions, but not as part of a continuing conversation over time that matured well beyond ancient times. Thus Ezra Pound thought he could directly engage with the Confucian classics and even translate them himself with minimal sinological expertise. Sometimes he succeeded brilliantly in intuiting and appropriating them for his own poetic purposes, but this fell short of explaining what the *Analects* or *Great Learning* had meant to later Chinese, Japanese, and Korean civilizations. In other words, it was more of an extension of Pound's own culture, his own exploratory venture into a past idealizing Confucianism, than it was a substantial engagement with Chinese culture or civilization in its mature forms.

The time has come, however, for us to extend the conversation to twenty-first-century education in ways that do justice to Asian classics not just as museum pieces but also as part of the historical process to be factored into an emerging world civilization. Given the domination of education today by economic and technological forces—the same forces that drive world business—the preservation of any humanities education at all is problematic now anywhere in the world. Chapter 4 speaks to the crisis in East Asian education: as in the West, modern Asian universities have found it difficult to sustain the reading of even their own classics in the undergraduate curriculum. But the reasons for it are the same as those that militate against any classical education at all, even in the West. For the most part, Chinese or Japanese classics are read only by a few East Asian students majoring in classics departments. Meanwhile, most students want to concentrate on economics, science, and technology, and for these English is the relevant language. Thus the problem for Asian education is little different from that in the West: how to sustain any place at all for the humanities in the curriculum. It is a global problem and raises the question everywhere whether traditional humanistic learning can be sustained as part of a new global