Report of the Committee on Basic Studies and Integrated Liberal Studies

The Committee on Basic Studies and Integrated Liberal Studies was appointed by Provost J. Martin Klotsche on April 26, 1960, to study the possibilities of establishing at the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee a program of studies which might fulfill the two functions of integrating various structures of knowledge which constitute the content of a variety of courses offered in the University and of formulating a basic curriculum of liberal studies which would serve as a foundation for specialization in any of the academic units of the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee. This is the first committee since the establishment of the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee which has been constituted with representatives from the College of Letters and Science, the School of Education, the Division of Commerce, and the Division of Engineering for the purpose of making a curriculum study. Previous curriculum studies have been confined within the limits of each academic unit.

The impetus for this curriculum study came from several sources. The foremost of these has been a growing need to define in philosophical terms the character of the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee as distinct from that of the University of Wisconsin (Madison). Secondly, within the academic world there is greater recognition of the growing national demand to base professional training or specialization of any kind on a firm foundation of liberal education. Thirdly, within the University of Wisconsin there is appearing a growing interest in training students in the early years to broaden their outlook, not only by familiarizing them with the broad categories of knowledge but also in having them see and understand the relationships between these areas of learning.

The structure of some programs of study within the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee seriously limits student choice to pursue exploratory learning. In the main, also, faculty interests are confined to the limits of departmental disciplines and a growing devotion to research is accelerating the intensification of specialization. Thus professional and liberal arts training is in like measure concentrating student attention on limited areas.

However, the rapidly expanding limits of knowledge imposes greater need to develop interpreters of this knowledge with ability to use their insights to think through new problems. In order to develop better students we must be certain that they are familiar with the basic processes not only of obtaining knowledge but also of understanding the relationships and abstract concepts which unite the various disciplines. It has therefore been the objective of the Committee to seek a structure of curriculum which would maintain the disciplines as a source of knowledge and which would also provide insights to the relationships which unite them.

The Committee recommends:

1. That the statement presented in Appendix I be adopted as a general statement of policy of the faculty of the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee.

2. That the Administration and the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee agree to considering a proposal for the establishment of a
Department of Basic Studies within the College of Letters and Science and that a temporary chairman-designate of such a possible department be appointed on a half-time basis with the sole responsibility at this time of developing a concrete proposal for the activation of the proposed Department of Basic Studies by September 1, 1962, following in general the proposals presented in Appendix II.

3. That the present inter-disciplinary committee, representing each of the several academic units of the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee, make the appropriate recommendations for the selection of a temporary chairman-designate to the Administration.

4. That the present committee act as an advisory committee to assist the chairman-designate in establishing the policies by which the department shall be governed and in accordance with which the chairman-designate will develop proposals for activating the Department of Basic Studies.

5. That the Provost, in consultation with the respective deans and directors, appoint a permanent Basic Studies Committee with representation from the College of Letters and Science, the School of Education, the Division of Commerce, and the Division of Engineering of the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee, effective September 1, 1962, to serve as an advisory committee to assist the Chairman in the formation of policies by which the department shall be governed.

6. That the faculty consider and act upon the concrete proposals for activating the Department of Basic Studies in the Faculty Meeting of March 8, 1962.

Committee on Basic Studies and Integrated Liberal Studies

Ray U. Brumblay
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A PHILOSOPHY FOR AN UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE

The Committee on Basic and Integrated Liberal Studies presents this statement much more from the philosophic than from the pragmatic or pedagogic perspective and invites thorough and critical consideration of its image of such studies.

Casting aside for the moment the adjectives "liberal" and "general," one or the other of which is frequently used to qualify collegiate programs, we choose to inquire into the nature and function of the college in the contemporary educational enterprise.

In order to identify the unique role which we believe the college should play in education, it is necessary to identify its basic purposes. The undergraduate college should undertake: (a) the task of communicating knowledge, keeping it as fresh and reliable as contact between teacher and research scholar--sometimes the same person--will permit; (b) the task of challenging and changing students or, as Karl Mannheim has phrased it, "of transforming human beings"; and (c) the task of producing human beings with a dedicated and knowledgeable acquaintance with the world in which they live--physical, social, and humane--in order that they may see and understand themselves in it, and, within the multitude of perceptions required for this, discover what their special talents, capabilities and interests are.

When these basic purposes of an undergraduate college are ignored, the following consequences are evident. Specialized knowledge, as the research scholar creates it, is communicated with little or no modification to the student with the result that his early academic experience is little more than a sequence of courses, constituting in sum introductions to separate and quite disparate bodies of knowledge so structured and taught as to presume that he is to become a specialist in each. The structure and content of such courses tends, characteristically, to cast the several disciplines and studies in the role of competitors for the special interests of students, thus tending to make the college a recruiting station for enlistments in the several specialisms. The task of integrating the several specialisms both within and between the three great fields of knowledge is left to the students, an end which only the ablest and most insightful student can even begin to achieve on his own.

Whether the conception of a proper collegiate enterprise set forth in these comments is better qualified by the adjective "basic," "integrated," "liberal," or "general" is not a matter of paramount concern to us. We believe, after Protagoras, that knowledge of things is not to be derived from names. However, after we have presented our image of the collegiate task in more specific terms, it may be that these adjectives will be joined as one to express the idea that the way to a liberal education is through general studies.

The task of general studies is to achieve what we believe to be the major and continuing obligation of the college, namely the synthesis of knowledge. Only to the degree that the present program of studies in the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee does not advance such an idea of synthesis, to that degree we believe the education which it offers ought to be put under critical study to the end that the value of the synthesis of knowledge may be better served.

In order to clarify the conception of general studies as the means to a liberal education it is necessary to explain the meaning of synthesis and to indicate how it may be achieved.

We understand synthesis to mean the identification and structuring of relationships between processes and ideas. The search for synthesis is to go on between teacher and student. In this view, a general education is to be had whenever there is "an explosive mixture of ideas" drawn from within each of the three great bodies of knowledge or, as well, from among them. The condition which Whitehead calls "the feebleness of coordination" might, we hope, thus be repaired, for the meaning of things is not to be found in isolation but in relation to other things. What Mannheim calls a "lack of awareness," caused by an education in unrelated specialisms, might thus be avoided.
The problem we face in developing general studies is not so much the fact that subject matter courses are separate but that, being separated, which is to say unrelated, little if any synthesis is achieved among them. Their appearance in sequence in a student's program does not bring this about. Thus it seems clear to us that integration, not addition, is the calculus on which we must rely.

This view does not abandon specialisms but, instead, requires that they be related, e.g., economics and ethics, physics and politics, literature and psychology. General studies are thus in our view studies of the disciplines treated in relation to each other, both within the three great fields of knowledge as well as among components of them.

The trend toward general studies in the American college has the character and force of a genuine social movement. It began with great dissatisfaction over the excessive influence of specialization in undergraduate education. It is now the major development in the curriculum of American colleges. There is no sign of its abatement. On the contrary, it manifests a vigorous growth.

The need for synthesis among the specialisms has been expressed repeatedly in this century by representative leaders in educational thought. Graham Wallas, the eminent British social philosopher wrote in 1914 in The Great Society,

We are forced now to recognize that a society whose intellectual direction consists only (or still chiefly) of unrelated specialisms, must drift, and that we dare drift no longer. We stand, as the Greek thinkers stood, in a new world. And because that world is new, we feel that neither the sectional observations of the special student, nor the ever-accumulating records of the past, nor the narrow experience of the practical man can suffice. We must let our minds play freely over all the conditions of life till we can either justify our civilization or change it.

Professor Wallas' figure of minds playing "freely over all the conditions of life" suggests the need to search for ways and, in whatever measure possible, to achieve a workable synthesis in collegiate education whose products are, in large numbers, the leaders-designate in the whole round of human affairs.

Alfred North Whitehead, one of the truly seminal minds of this century, wrote that "there is only one subject matter for education [liberal, was the adjective he used] and that is Life in all its manifestations." If this observation is taken in the spirit and context of his writings on education which are many, it affirms synthesis to be the great desideratum in education. Ruskin and Emerson voiced the same philosophy fifty years or more earlier.

Whitehead was especially concerned with the limits of specialization and, correspondingly, with the limitations of the specialist whose difficulties are, as Whitehead put it, not that he is specialist but that he is only specialist. In the chapter "Requisites for Social Progress" in Science and the Modern World, the burden of Whitehead's commentary is on the need for, and the dire want of, an education, even for specialized professional pursuits, which will teach men that there is no "groove of abstractions," that is, no specialization, "which is adequate for a comprehension of human life."

When we turn to Karl Mannheim's Diagnosis of Our Time, and perhaps his greatest book, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction, we find that he places education among the sciences concerned with "influencing behavior" and, in that view, conceives it as providing the "principia media of character formation," about which, as perhaps the ultimate measure of synthesis we shall comment later.
Among a host of contemporary scholars, many of them eminent scientists whose advisements and challenges respecting the tragic lack of communication and understanding between science and the humane studies we dare not take lightly, we mention Sir Charles Snow, the British humanist, and Isidor Rabi, eminent atomic physicist of Columbia University. Sir Charles' plaint is that "there seems to be no place where the two cultures meet," that is, in our idiom, where synthesis takes place. The essence of Professor Rabi's concern is that we shall not achieve wisdom which "is by nature an interdisciplinary quality and not a product of a collection of specialists" unless we can find ways for effecting a meeting of minds between scientist and humanist. Let it be noted that neither Snow nor Rabi envisages, as a consequence of synthesis, the diminution of the stature or either the sciences or the humanities, rather their growth and enrichment through mutual understanding. To the names of Snow and Rabi many others might be added, among them J. Bronowski who, especially for his little book, Science and Human Values, earned Julian Huxley's accolade as a "distinguished scientist and inspiring humanist"; Edmund Sinnott, now Professor Emeritus of Botany at Yale, whose Biology of the Spirit and his earlier book, Two Roads to Truth provide instruction and inspiration on the nature of synthesis; J. Robert Oppenheimer whose chapter "Prospects in the Arts and Sciences," in his The Open Mind, stirs our thoughts and informs our hearts; and Philip Frank whose Modern Science and Its Philosophy helps immensely our conception of the relation between the two dominant ways of knowing as embodied in scientific and humanistic studies. A phrase from his book more or less sums up the matter, at least respecting the scope of courses in science, in his observation that we can close the gap between science and the humanities "by starting from the human values which are intrinsic to science itself."

These observations lead us to an examination of the nature of the obligation which the college bears to its society, even to the civilization of its time. We approach this examination from the perspective of the aim and purpose of education, broadly conceived, since Plato's time.

Consider, first, the educational theory in the Republic. It is ruled by the image of athletic young men "of family," disciplined, and regimented to fit into and serve a society living mostly by the sword. Consider next the dual educational standards of the Catholic Church in the course of the Middle Ages: one for the celibate clergy to play the priestly role and administer the secular economy of a vast ecclesiastical domain and the other, for the feudal landlords who lived chiefly by force and fraud. Later under the influence of the Renaissance education became humanistic, not a priggish but quite to the contrary a lusty humanism. Follow on to seventeenth century New England where the English dissenters, the initiators of education in America, sought to produce a gentleman covenanter or a Puritan pastor. Thus, from Plato to our own time, including Rousseau's wish to take his scholars out of the society of their time in order, paradoxically, to prepare them to live in it, no educational theory has conceived of anything which one might call "a natural human being" (Naturnmensch), that is a human being defined as a person to be educated, without regard to the special circumstances and demands of his time and place.

It is clear that education cannot derive from itself but always from the needs and requirements of the culture in whose service it seeks to produce the character type equipped with the skills, knowledge, tastes, and beliefs appropriate to sustain and advance that culture.

Here, in rapid and brief survey, is documentation of our view that it is the elaboration of a quality of character to which education has always been beholden and this by reason of the fact that the culture can go to school only by the proxy of its personal representatives. In short, education has never undertaken to produce man in the abstract, but always in terms of the needs and requirements which given cultures have demanded and defined as necessary to their survival and advance. The person, so understood, has been the ultimate locus of the synthesis of the fruits of scholarship consisting as it does of knowledge, skills, and values.
Because, as a people, we subscribe to cultural pluralism we also subscribe to and encourage, as its necessary corollary, personal pluralism or individual uniqueness. This presumes that the synthesis at which our students ought to arrive will have a common spirit and dedication but will manifest itself in ways which respect individual uniqueness. It is such diversity which, in the democratic credo, enriches and advances collective achievement. This image is not given grudgingly. It is the free admission which belief in the education of self-realizing human beings in a commonwealth of self-realizing human beings permits and requires.

We undertake now to state our conception of how general studies differ from those based on specialisms and largely confined to them.

Perhaps the essential difference between courses with the single objective of teaching the parent disciplines, and those of a more general but still highly disciplined nature, is the pre-occupation of the former with structure and logic as such while, for the latter, the pre-occupation is with the problems which will permit, to a manageable degree, the derivation of structure and logic and insofar as possible, their submission to empirical test.

That difficulties attend the organization and teaching of general courses, as we have sought to characterize them, is not denied. The synthetic approach is, inherently, more difficult than the approach by specialisms but the former has distinct virtues. These difficulties and virtues are stated with rare insight by Hoyt Hudson, late professor of literature at Stanford University in his book, *Educating Liberally*. He writes that the synthesizer lays himself open to attack from every quarter and by a variety of weapons. The specialist is safer, for he can be attacked only at a single point and by one sort of weapon. What the specialized critic overlooks is that his very safety is dangerous, so far as it depends on isolation, and that the synthetic thinker runs his hazards (of superficiality, of confusion, of categories, of false analogies) in the interest of a high cause—namely, the relief of man’s estate... it is surely not exorbitant to suggest that one goal—perhaps the highest—of any specialized group of thinkers should be the discovery of ideas and principles which may be added to man’s common stock, with applications that transcend the field of their discovery. Here I am inclined to say, at the risk of sounding unacceptably, that a serious attempt to find effective relations among fields of study and knowledge is more praiseworthy than a dexterous, whether explicit in a statement or implicit in practice, that such relations exist...

The issue of when, in the student’s experience, the general approach should come warrants serious consideration. Two things, it seems to us, are involved: (a) what we choose to call "typing the student," that is, permitting him to specialize, and (b) closely related to it, the time and place in his experience to be allotted to exploration rather than to specialization.

Respecting the first, it may be observed that it is characteristic of totalitarian societies and non-totalitarian societies with fairly rigid or "closed" class structures, that the young be "typed" quite early. Since typing is not, in such social systems, the prerogative of the student himself it is done by the state or other central agencies. Democracies, ideally at least, do not subscribe to such procedures. They may, and often do, err on the side of giving students more freedom to type themselves than their knowledge and insight prepares them to do wisely. The existing curricula of the University are designs by which the student within the framework of the elective system is introduced to courses in the
natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. However, the actual consequence, all too frequently, is that too early choice of specialisms turns out to be made on insubstantial grounds much to the injury of the student making such erroneous and uninformed judgments, to say nothing about its negative social consequences.

Thus the issue of when, in his collegiate experience, the student should be permitted to choose his major turns out, in our judgment, to be secondary to the issue of his need for an experience in exploration, under competent auspices, into the many competing and often conflicting potential fields among which he might choose. The question of "What shall I do with my life?" is a momentous one and we should insure, as best we can, that it is not answered lightly and without a general acquaintance with alternatives. There is a profound sense, however, in which the student's early collegiate experience ought to be viewed from a perspective other than that of the choice of specialism. This is the perspective of as wide and rich an intellectual development as we can possibly afford him within which the issue of choice of a major should have a proper though not exaggerated place.

In any event the issue of national security, particularly as it is conceived to involve first and foremost the student's early choice of a major in the natural sciences, should not be permitted to deflect or confuse either his thought or ours from the issue of the wisest and most appropriate investment of his talents and the direction of his life's course. Above all, we must not allow what President Griswold calls "spasms of anxiety about Russia" to lure us to strengthen the bastion of our fists at the cost of weakening the bastion of our spirit, included in which is the best distribution of the talent and dedication of our young people.

Although we do not presume to dictate what the patterns should be within which the subject-matter and methods of the three great bodies of knowledge might most usefully be brought into varying degrees and kinds of synthesis, we do wish to share with you some insights which may bear helpfully on how things may be tied together, as well as how they stand apart. In these comments we entertain nothing in the nature of "analysis versus synthesis" but rather the view that the coin of understanding has two faces, one analysis, the other synthesis. It is our judgment that what is taken apart by analysis ought to be put together by synthesis.

We think, first, of the relation between the social sciences and the humanities. To the query concerning what they have in common, the late Robert Redfield replied that "they have humanity in common." Humanity, he wrote,

is the subject matter of those who look at men as they are represented in books or works of art, and of those who look at men as they appear in institutions and indirect-visible action...As physics is concerned with energy and matter, and biology with organisms and life processes, so social science is concerned with the way men and women feel and think and act...What matters to us all, what we live for, is sympathy, understanding, imagination, reason, tradition, aspiration, and personal and human association.

But what the social sciences and the humanities have in common they do not study by identical methods. If we accept Karl Jasper's view that the humanistic enters when we acknowledge that humanity cannot be deduced from any number of principles, we identify the ground for differentiating social from humanistic study. Thus it is appropriate to remark that to the degree that sets of principles can be elaborated about what man is and does, we can understand him. But, to the degree that he cannot be wholly comprehended by principles, that much that is human lies outside them, what he is and does can be appreciated. Yet the different scientific and humanistic approaches to man need to be related if we are to know "entire man."
If we would know the deepest sense in which the humanities and the social sciences are related or how, so to speak, they might enter into a useful and enlightening synthesis we shall be obliged to accept Shelley's profound observation that "poets are the founders of civil society" and hence that the moral or social sciences only arrange the elements which poetry has created, with poetry interpreted as imagination spending itself completely, even recklessly.

The relations, liaisons if you will, which can be traced and given significance between the natural sciences and the social and humane studies are so rich as to beggar the imagination. Consider, however, such themes as these: man is a part of nature and though "but a reed, the weakest in nature, is a thinking reed"; the view that the social and the humane do not lie merely on top of the physical but, rather, that the physical is taken up into the realm of the social and humanistic and there transformed by interaction with a complex inter-weaving of the economic, the political, the cultural, the aesthetic and the ethical and religious; how the elaboration of the natural sciences and their technological products have disturbed traditional social and moral patterns, even to the extent to which the logic and ethos of the natural sciences have been given a place in the value system of Western societies which profoundly distinguishes them from other historic and even some contemporary societies; how the spirit of science ties science to art; the significance of man's rich accumulation of knowledge in such areas as biology, botany and physiology and its impact, potential or actual, on political, economic and religious forms and practices; and the themes and configurations in literature as they may be related to pre- and post-scientific epochs.

We think, also, of the very general problems capable of being elaborated with significant meaning on the relation of man to his fellows and to the material world through the medium of symbol systems rather than instincts. This perspective would, we believe, help students to understand what is common and what is different among such symbolic means as language, magic, religion, science, literature and the arts. From such study there might come the sense in which the humanistic is distinctively the center and ultimate coordinating principle in man's historic adventure as thinker, appreciator and believer.

Within the three great bodies of knowledge the opportunities for the cross-fertilization and synthesis of disciplines and studies are almost without number. They are, perhaps, somewhat more achievable since teachers and scholars have had a longer experience within these divisions of knowledge than between them. Studies, so ordered, would seek to make clear the nature of the social order seen in its full scope and range, and similarly the order of physical nature. In the field of humane studies we think, for instance, of the service which the study of the method of philosophy could perform, as well as the role of literature and the fine arts viewed as media for the expression of both the thought and emotion of man.

There remains, in this broad survey of some of the axes along which synthesis might be achieved, the methods and techniques which men employ in their endeavor to disclose the secrets of the social and natural orders as well as the disciplines and precisions associated with the humanities. On the analytic side this would obligate the student to understand the division of scholarly and artistic labor. On the synthetic side it would confront him with the obligation to discover what is common among such methods and techniques. From this perspective his task would be to know and learn to use the tools and employ the imagination required by the discourse of reason as these means are distributed along the continuum which runs from the pole of "the spirit of geometry" to the pole of "the spirit of finesse" of Pascal's idiom.

In the kinds of studies we conceive to be means proper for the achievement of a truly liberal education, unique demands are made on the art of teaching. It will find its general purpose in Seneca's admonition against "teaching for the classroom, rather than
for life." It will seek not only to inform but to inspire; to touch and challenge the student's will and desire—otherwise, how can knowledge every play a role in the affairs of men. Thus, in Whitehead's magnificent imagery, it will seek to prove "a larger knowledge and a firmer purpose."

It will strive for intellectual and moral excellence, as much by example as by precept. It will undertake to provide the student with an understanding of his world—operational, of course—not enjoin his adjustment to it. It will seek not only to discipline him in the precision of thought but also to engender the attitude of thoughtfulness. For him, just to know, ought to be, at the same time, the want to care. It will seek to make the student skillful in the arts of communication but only because of our faith that there is awakened in him something worthy of being shared.

Such teaching will, in sum, seek to make the student a cultured person in the understanding that by "cultured" is meant one who is cognizant of the whole of which he is a part, is dedicated to it, knowledgeable about it and concerned to discover how we may make his own best contribution to it.

The educational image which we have sought to share with you will thus find its focus in the student's character. However, as we observed earlier, education does not seek to mold men in the abstract but always in and for the culture of their time and place. This is the larger focus. We believe that the metropolis, as microcosm within which the nature and prospects of men may be studied, now and in historic depth, provides a significant and strategic frame of reference for a program of integrated liberal studies in this, an urban university.

To the fear that such a cultural reference would make for parochialism we see in it no such danger. Quite to the contrary, for we envisage the metropolis as microcosm in which is mirrored the macrocosm of the great society which now includes and involves all mankind. But the nature of the program of studies which we have projected would inspire, further, against any narrowing of the student's intellectual and moral outlook for we are dedicated to the view that liberal studies, in being general, possess a classic quality which by definition, is a quality of universal worth, goodness and truth which is as appropriate and useful in places remote in time and space as at its point of origin.
Appendix II

GENERAL OUTLINE OF A BASIC STUDIES PROGRAM

It is possible that a Department of Basic Studies could be constituted as a pilot project with a limited core of courses representing the traditional divisions of knowledge to which freshmen students would be admitted on the basis of their own election.

The synthesis would be achieved by having each course contribute to the understanding of a general semester topic which would focus attention primarily on man in an urban environment. It is possible certainly that basic courses in every department of the University could be adapted to illuminate some phase of this study of man.

A syllabus would have to be devised for each course to determine the specific manner in which it will contribute to the understanding of the problem and its relationship to the other courses in the program. But each course would also have to maintain its content of fundamental principles so that a student could advance from it to other courses in the same area of specialization.

The faculty should be appointed entirely on split appointments so that each member would remain firmly within the area of his specialization while at the same time pushing out the limits of his specialization to effect junctures with other disciplines.

The faculty members would be chosen by the chairman, not only because of academic competence but also because of their complete commitment to the implementation of this program. Faculty members thus chosen would have to be willing to adapt themselves to the total program and to the needs of both the students and the colleagues, not only within the Department but also in the University. The implementation and development of the program would evolve from a continuing colloquium, in which the department faculty would participate as a primary obligation, and from the continuous interchange of opinion between faculty members and students. It would also be a major obligation of the department faculty to stress individual conferences as part of teaching.

It must be assumed that faculty merit in such a department will be measured in terms of contribution to the development of its program. Initially much effort would be demanded for preparation of materials and time would be consumed by discussion of problems. But eventually the faculty would make its scholarly contributions to the area of general education and would certainly win renown if it found the synthesis which could unite areas of specialization without having them lose their identity.

It would be folly on the part of this Committee to attempt to define the implementation in greater detail. But this framework if used as a guide for committed personnel and students would certainly insinuate a unique and very complete education for freshmen and sophomore students.

The Committee can only hope to stimulate the imagination of the faculty members to recognize that richer possibilities of teaching and learning can be achieved.