

# Re-humanization

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bodies. Two objections may be raised to this solution. To begin with, too few students are appointed to those bodies to be of any real importance and the radicals, using a term borrowed from the vocabulary of the U.S. civil rights movement, dubbed it "tokenism".

Secondly, even if the policy-making bodies were composed entirely of students, this solution, if not accompanied by a radical transformation of teaching, is a palliative, makeshift, stopgap measure. It may well satisfy the student leaders, be they of radical or conservative convictions, but it will not drain the seething bog of discontent of their constituents which created the present crisis.

The solutions must be directed toward the roots of the resentment and have to deal with the conditions which create the alienation of the student—the classroom conditions.

The first proposed change, while most expensive, is easiest in terms of human resistance and simultaneously not profound in its implications. There should be established an upper limit to the size of any class—somewhere around the figure of forty. As the first step of the reform only the size of the first year classes will be limited, because the freshmen are most vulnerable and they deserve most personal attention to adjust to university scholastic demands.

Secondly, a doctoral degree is not a necessary qualification to

teach, at least not undergraduate courses. There is no reason why the university, in order to cope with its growing enrollment, should not hire people on Master's level. Not everybody is interested in, or qualified for, doing research, but one need not be a researcher to teach; as a matter of fact, these two occupations require completely different skills.

The second proposed reform may sound revolutionary, yet, when considered dispassionately and without preconceptions, it becomes so obvious that one wonders why the universities have never seriously considered it, let alone implemented it.

**The student is surrounded by an anonymous human conglomerate for grades, and the anonymity of the enemy makes him more anxiety-provoking and dangerous.**

To become a teacher in an elementary school one spends four years at the university and about half of that time is devoted to learning how to teach, what methods of instruction to use, how to supplement the spoken word with teaching aids, and studying the psychological processes operating in the pupils. In other words, it is recognized that it is not enough to have knowledge to be able to impart it to others—this is a skill which has to be acquired. But the same university does not train its

own teachers, as if assuming that if one has been so bright that he became a university student then it does not matter how he is taught; somehow, by sheer "exposure" to the accumulated wisdom of mankind, flowing abundantly from his teachers, he will become even brighter.

The third reform has to deal with misapplication of statistical concepts, namely the grading on the basis of normal curve. The normal curve assumption says that if values are randomly drawn from a population, then, if sufficient number of values is drawn, their distribution, represented graphically, will adopt a particular shape called "normal frequency curve". The values of the normal curve centre around the mean, both ends are equidistant from the mean and the frequency of values at both ends is the same. This assumption is valid when applied to a random sample before it was submitted to any outside influence.

So the third proposed reform is: return the normal curve to its rightful owners—the statisticians—they at least know when, how, and where to apply it.

The fourth fallacy of the present educational system is the type of examination. It is commonly accepted that at the time of the examination the student has to know all the required facts and he is not allowed to consult his books or notes. When the student leaves the university and goes to work he is never required to avoid using books. Why then at the university, which has to prepare him for life, is he forced to do what he will never do in his future life? Open book examinations are more difficult, more challenging, more satisfying, and more meaningful.

Examinations are anxiety-provoking situations and they make some people sick—either in the figurative or the literal sense of the word. A considerable percent-

age of talented students drop out of the university, because they can not cope with the pressure of examinations.

**The solutions must be directed toward the roots of the resentment and have to deal with the conditions which create the alienation of the student—the classroom conditions.**

While it may be assumed that if the content of examinations is changed, they will cease to be fearsome initiation rites and become an opportunity for proving one's originality, still there is the element of timing which may be difficult to cope with for some people. For those, who are unwilling or unable to write examinations, independent research papers should be substituted. It may well be that some of the more creative and original minds will develop and bloom under this system.

I propose that a Department for Utilization of Human Potential be

established and because of its importance be headed by a vice-president. This department will draw on the scientific resources of the university and apply them creatively for the full development of human abilities. It will differentiate between tradition and petrified customs, it will discriminate between useful routine and mental stagnation, it will distinguish between the instrumental and the redundant, between the central and the marginal, between the useful and the useless, between the original and the mere cliché. It will help the whole university community—faculty, staff, and students alike—to adjust themselves to the ever-accelerating velocity of change. And if the change becomes too fast and too bewildering, too disorderly and too confused, this department will guide that change so that it will be beneficial and welcomed by all concerned.

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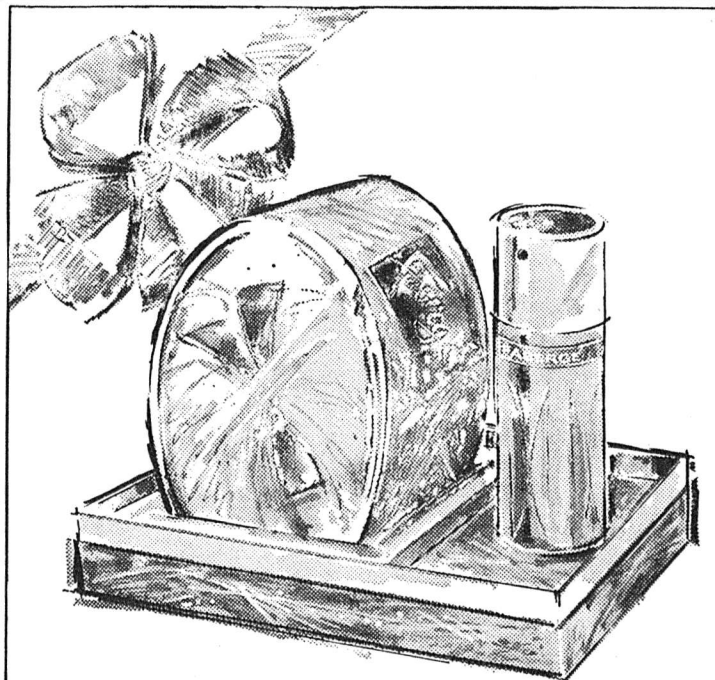
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