



## ON EDUCATING THE WHOLE PERSON, OR LEARNING TO BE A KNOWER<sup>1</sup>

J. Scott Lee<sup>2</sup>

---

**ABSTRACT:** This paper addresses the question whether liberal arts education and the humanities can currently be used to build university reputations. Laudatory in its connotations, the phrase, “Educating the Whole Person,” is widely used in heterogeneous liberal education programs to describe the purpose or function of these programs. Would the history of liberal education be useful to sort out the current meanings of the phrase, and can the phrase be used to raise the stature of educational institutions? The paper finds that in undergraduate education, learning to be a knower *across disciplines* is closely identified with an education of the whole person through the liberal arts. Yet, developed parallel to the historical inquiry of the phrase’s meaning is a steady erosion of the liberal arts structuring education, as disciplines subordinate or replace those arts with their own specialized concerns. Ultimately, this subordination has meant that the humanities have turned inward, away from public, cultural involvement that historically characterized the liberal arts. Instead, the humanities might re-focus upon the liberal arts, which have historically addressed both the arts and sciences, as a public expression of what it is to be a knower and, thus, help to build university reputations through educating the whole person.

**KEYWORDS:** Liberal Education, Liberal Arts Education, Whole Person, Trivium, Quadrivium, Humanities

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is based in the lecture delivered by the author on March 30, 2017 in the International Conference BUR (Building Universities’ Reputation), at the University of Navarra. The author has revised and completed it in May 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Retired Executive Director of the Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC). Email: jscottlee@prodigy.net

I was graciously invited to the Building Universities' Reputation Conference by Professor José Torralba of Universidad de Navarra to speak about "Educating the Whole Person." Aside from my high regard for Professor Torralba, I accepted the invitation for two reasons; (1) Universities and colleges offer such a range of liberal education programs that it cannot be said one program is the same as another, but the phrase enjoys a wide use across all kinds of programs advertising themselves as liberal education. So, for some time before receiving the invitation, I have wondered what the phrase means; and, (2) I wanted to think about how the phrase might aid liberal arts education in a public defense or promote liberal education's many advantages.

To find the proper context and use of the phrase, "educating the whole person," I will begin with our common notions of a person within colleges or universities. Then, I'll concentrate on the historical growth and, sometimes, shrinkage of the idea of educating the whole person in ancient and modern liberal arts education.<sup>3</sup> Developed parallel to this historical overview is a narrative of steady erosion of the liberal arts structuring education, as disciplines subordinate or replace those arts with their own concerns within universities. This subordination has meant that publication in the humanities has turned inward, away from the public, cultural involvement that historically characterized the liberal arts. The net result is that the humanities are no longer in a position to help with building university reputations. Yet, the humanities might, in reconsidering the importance of liberal arts, become "public" again and help to build university reputations through educating the whole person.

Society often demands or shapes a kind of person: "American," "European," "citizen," "professional," "audience," and even "speaker" are terms for the ways in which a particular context begins to call forth the persons who inhabit the context. Two contexts which seem more pertinent to universities and colleges are "arts" and "sciences," for it is nearly impossible to imagine these institutions without arts and sciences, while one can imagine universities and colleges without specific nationalities or professions. A former President of the University of Chicago is said to have remarked, once, that you could have a university without students. Of course, he was referring to the research that university and collegiate faculty conduct. But such research is often conducted in institutions which are not universities or colleges.<sup>4</sup>

A university or college is distinguished by its devotion to education in the arts and sciences, a cultivation of forms of knowledge essential to the relationship between faculty and students as persons teaching and learning. In this *educational* sense, knowledge is the context for persons within a university or college. Though teachers and undergraduates can generate new knowledge in education, centrally, undergraduate education in the arts and sciences focuses upon *learning to be a knower* and one does not accomplish that simply by being educated toward producing additions to knowledge. For even if one were to acquire a discipline that led to knowledge acquisition or production, we would have little assurance that that person knew anything outside of that one discipline.

Humanists might argue that the humanities have been excluded by my locution of "the arts and sciences," and so their personhood within these institutions would go

<sup>3</sup> This review will not take into account the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis* or different, often diffuse or vague, uses of the phrase "educating the whole person" so common on websites espousing liberal education programs.

<sup>4</sup> These include hospitals, corporations, government departments, policy institutions and museums. Further, disciplinary associations do not function as universities do, despite some parallels. Disciplinary organs are, by definition, not multi-disciplinary as universities and liberal arts colleges are. Such organs publish and advance careers, but they do not, directly at least, promote, tenure, or hire.

unrecognized. But the history of studying and teaching by humanists has been intellectually and practically tied to the liberal and fine arts and sciences since, at least, Cicero. The rise of Humanism during the Renaissance renewed the tie, particularly, to the literary liberal arts. Even today, we find substantial groups of humanists identifying with the liberal arts, e.g., in a recent report by The Working Group of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University.<sup>5</sup>

The educational term, “liberal arts,” historically suggests learning more than one art. Humanists during the Renaissance unquestionably knew and taught more than one art. In U. S. colleges of arts and sciences, students take undergraduate degrees that are named “bachelors-of-arts,” and the curricula of American colleges typically reflect an educational encounter by undergraduates with multiple disciplines. At present, whether faculty share any cross-disciplinary encounters is highly dependent on the programs each university or college offers. European degrees or licentiates, particularly in Spain, are very discipline-specific. But in the last 20 years, over 20 liberal arts colleges in Europe have come into being and liberal arts programs have been introduced as part of a degree.<sup>6</sup><sup>7</sup> Whether formally or informally, if we are going to discuss the whole person in the context of university education, we will have to meet the idea of learning, perhaps teaching, more than one art, science, or discipline in a liberal education.

So, let us start our search for “educating the whole person” in historical discussions of what are typically taken as some of the important developments in the theoretical and practical evolution of liberal education. Many of Plato’s dialogues discuss education, the care and nature of the soul, and different forms of art. Yet, none of these put together so completely a justification and outline of something approaching a *multidisciplinary* curriculum—that is, a curriculum deploying many arts and sciences—as does the *Republic*.

The *Republic* is a political treatise and its multidisciplinary outline of education arises (at 376d) as a consequence of (i) a search for justice as a virtue within an individual human being (367d), and (ii) an argumentative move to begin this search in evidence of more widespread justice or injustice in the city (368e). The argument toward founding a city and, therefore, its education, has an important prefatory context—that of art, that is, *techné*. Allan Bloom is correct when he says, “[art] means a discipline operating on the basis of principles which can be taught (...) in Plato the terms ‘art’ and ‘science’ are often indistinguishable [as well as] (...) rational and intelligible.”<sup>8</sup>

This characterization or use of art warrants some fleshing out. In Plato and other ancient writers, art characteristically attends and operates upon specific subject matters (332d); as a body of knowledge possessed by artists/scientists/craftsmen, an art has standards for correctness and mistakes (340e); correctness entails a sense of the completeness or defectiveness of the art itself (342a; 345d), as well as its subject’s better and worse states; arts are purposive (341e), and some of these purposes are

<sup>5</sup> Working Group of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard College, Report “The Teaching of the Arts and Humanities at Harvard College: Mapping the Future,” (Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Marijk van der Wende, “The Emergence of Liberal Arts and Sciences Education in Europe: A Comparative Perspective,” *Higher Education Policy*, 24 (2011): 237-253.

<sup>7</sup> The Association for Core Texts and Courses recently helped to sponsor a conference organized by four European Universities, held in the Netherlands, Liberal Arts and Sciences Education and Core Texts in the European Context, 11- 12 September 2015, Amsterdam University College.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. with notes and an interpretative essay by Allan Bloom. (New York: Basic Books, 1968), “Notes,” # 22, p.443. All quotations and citations are taken from this edition.

directive, that is ruling, over other humans (e.g., a pilot's art in part consists in directing or ruling sailors, 341c-d; 345d); the arts incorporate what is advantageous for the art itself, its agents and its patients; and most importantly arts have specific capacities, functions or activities, as well as benefits by which we differentiate them (345e-346c). It is within this framework of intelligible, rational, actional and productive arts that education is understood as a proto-curriculum concerned with justice within the *Republic*.

So, Plato asks what arts are necessary to establishing a city and to sufficing its inhabitants' needs (369b-d); what arts are instrumental to serving those needs (370d-371e); and what arts arise when the city moves beyond needs toward luxuries and the "unlimited acquisition of money" (373a-d). It is these latter arts that give rise to the art of war, the agents of which ultimately become the guardians and rulers of the city. In short, the creation of Plato's "city in speech" (369a) and the problem of justice is a problem of art.

A question arises whether the city and the partners in it are better served by each person acquiring many arts or each person concentrating on one art and, ultimately, trading the surplus production of that art's goods for goods from other artists. Correlatively, there is a question of the natural suitability or aptitude of individuals to different arts. A principle akin to the division of labor is found, implying, again, the perfection, completion, or wholeness of each art: "Different men are apt for the accomplishment of different jobs (...) Who would do a finer job, one man practicing many arts or one man one art? (...) So, on this basis each thing becomes more plentiful, fine, and easier, when one man, exempt from other tasks, does one thing according to nature and at the crucial moment" (369e-370c; also 397a). This is, of course, the principle later reformulated as justice in Plato's city.

This proto-principle of justice brings with it a problem: the city has many artist-citizens with many arts; its rulers must rule over and protect all of those that contribute to the justice of the city; is there any way to learn to rule over so many different arts and agents, without in some way learning many arts and, thereby, encroaching on the one person/one job principle? In modern terms: what is the specialty of the ruler or, perhaps, is there such a specialty? Is multi-artistry, multi-disciplinarity of some sort possible in one person, one class of knowers? The expression of these concerns comes in the need for citizen soldiers who are fierce in the city's defense but gentle with its citizens. How, then, will citizen soldiers be educated to possess these seemingly opposite qualities?

The search for the education of the guardians takes the form of an artistic inquiry; that is, a certain end or product —a character— is posited; the character has to be correctly formed while meeting standards set, at first, by the problems of aggression and friendship in the city; capabilities specific to the guardian's character are adduced, and the appropriate means are brought to bear. So, certain capabilities are cultivated: practiced skills, including spirit, swiftness, and strength for the art of war because the city's aggressive fulfillment of desires leads to fights with neighbors (373a-374d); a love of learning, since the guardian has to learn to distinguish friend from foe (376a-c); and, an appropriate familiarity with very specific forms of artistic imitation, mostly music or language based. Familiarity with imitation arises because artistic forms initially regulate skills of war and love of learning about friends.

Two aspects of character formation are structured by imitation. The first aspect is "opinions" of the young (377a-b). A child or young person is most "plastic," so the argument quickly develops into a discussion of excluding extracted passages from the literary heritage of Greece because they exhibit "lies," "bad representations," and inadequate artistic resemblance to the thing resembled or modeled (377d-378a),

especially with respect to Greek theogeny and theology. The education connects the intellectual and emotional activity of young people to imitative means of inculcation of opinion and emotions, which, in turn, are connected to external, larger, truer models. For example, Socrates notes that “Above all, it mustn’t be said that gods make war on gods, and plot against [each other] —for it isn’t even true— provided those who are going to guard the city must consider it shameful to be easily angry with one another. They are far from needing to have tales told and embroideries woven about battles (...) and disputes of gods and heroes with their families and kin” (378c).

The second aspect of character formation depends on musical imitations. Musical modes are selected to reinforce courage or endurance (399b), as well as irenic, hortatory acts, or self-restraint.<sup>9</sup> The selected modes —including their rhythms— are meant to enhance, lead to, or follow ‘the speech of a [courageous]’ person (399e). That is, musical and language imitations not only cultivate habits of moral virtues, they prepare for intellectual achievement: “[Music] is sovereign because the man properly reared on rhythm and harmony would have the sharpest sense for what’s been left out and what isn’t a fine product of craft or what isn’t a fine product of nature (...) He would blame and hate the ugly in the right way while he’s still young, before he’s able to grasp reasonable speech. And when reasonable speech comes, the man who’s reared in this way would take most delight in it, recognizing it on account if it’s being akin” (401d-402e).

Even in these early stages of development we can recognize a complexity of what it means to learn to be a knower. Plato adumbrates a set of concerns we will be tracing throughout this talk, but the complexity of *learning to know* is, in Plato, one of educating moral and intellectual development, not as if they were separate components, but as interacting aspects of character organized toward an assimilation of various arts directed towards performance of guardianship, or ruling, regulated by standards which are external to the learner.

Up to this point, while the education has not touched anything like what we think of as a science. The transition to a study of the sciences happens during the discussion of the divided line and after the analogy of the cave. What is being attended to, here, are objects of sciences which, whatever visible representation there might be, can only be grasped by intellect. Put differently, the question “what is it,” an appeal to the intellect, arises when the senses are either insufficient or contradictory in their presentation of an object to be known. For example, we tend to imagine a line drawn on a sheet of paper, when we are asked what a line is. But Euclid’s definition of a line is really an appeal to the intellect, not the imagination: “A line is breadthless length.” Such axioms or hypotheses of sciences —including geometry, mathematics, astronomy, and harmonics— are taken as the starting points for arguments that are developed within the sciences (510d). These sciences, explicitly called ‘arts’ and distinguished from dialectic, contain in their foundational hypotheses the stepping stones to apprehending forms or ideas, the apex of what exists for Plato. Dialectic or, if one wishes, philosophy, becomes the master art (511d) because proceeding through the sciences, it renders an account of scientific principles by examining the “problems” or the reasons for the existence of these objects of thought: e.g., what is meant by saying that a line is composed of dimensionless points? Provided that we remember that we are obligated to deal with sciences in order to apprehend what truth looks like (527e),

<sup>9</sup> We still recognize these powers of music. Few are the rock and roll songs which urge restraint; some symphonic music is certainly irenic, and there are available battles songs which stir the hearts of soldiers; in the U.S., The Battle Hymn of the Republic was one such civil war song.

the entire process of dialectic can be summed up as an imperative sentence from Book VII: "... pay special attention to the education on the basis of which [students] will be able to question and answer most knowledgeably" (534d).

Whether or not we agree with Plato's proto-curriculum, the implication is that within limits a whole of knowledge is available to education. That whole is not every scrap of information or all practiced arts and sciences, but what knowledge serves the best city and justice in forming the curriculum for the guardians. Looked at broadly, knowledge is not just political, though politics is the architect of the studied subjects. Unlike modern liberal education, the limits are not defined by scientific controversies or political shades of partisanship, but rather what is educationally useful to discerning what of the visible and intelligible world will best serve humanity. In this latter sense, through dialectic, the area of this education extends beyond political art *per se*. In sum, the whole person who is educated in the *Republic* is one who can aspire not just to the best regime, but one who has been cultivated in the arts and sciences to learn to know the truth as it pervades the polis of this world.

Bruce Kimball, a noted historian of liberal education, wrote the book *Orators & Philosophers*, in which he argues that a practiced liberal arts curriculum did not exist until Roman times and this curriculum was developed out of the *liberal artes* tradition of rhetorical reflection upon education, developed by Isocrates, Cicero, Quintilian (33).<sup>10</sup> On behalf of rhetoric, Kimball argues the orators had an important communicative and epistemological point against philosophers and experts: Socrates' city was ideal; if Socrates, or an expert, cannot communicate effectively or actually show the lived effects of philosophy or a discipline, then what difference has it made in the world? (*De Oratore*, I. 34-35, 63, 65).<sup>11</sup> This question by the orators re-admits into education pretty much the whole of Greek and Roman culture as it had developed up to the first century BCE, for not only is rhetoric the art of free citizens, but the empirical culture of arts forms the commonplaces out of which communication and demonstration arise (I. 56, 72). With the shift to the art of rhetoric, the person who is most completely educated changes.

Historically, the rhetoric concerns which came to dominate liberal arts education were centered on character, particularly that of the orator, in terms of artistry, not morality. This centeredness on artistry is most apparent in Cicero's dialogue, *De Oratore*, and is only possible if it is understood that language, the verbal debates and decisions of assemblies, and the clash of pleas by contestants, give rise to civilization, institutions, and morality. Crassus, the dialogue's primary interlocutor makes this priority of art clear: "To come, however, (...) to the highest achievements of eloquence, what other power could have been strong enough either to gather scattered humanity into one place, or to lead it out of its brutish existence in the wilderness up to our present condition of civilization (...) or after the establishment of social communities, to give shape to laws, tribunals, and civic rights?" (I. 33). Language arts are co-extensive with the rise of civilizations and prior to polities. The priority is conferred because the practitioners of the art are most reliant on what distinguishes them as humans amongst all living beings: "For the one point in which we have our very greatest advantage over the brute creation is that we hold converse one with another. Who therefore would not rightly admire this faculty and [attempt to] surpass [other] men in that particular respect

<sup>10</sup> Bruce A. Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education*, (New York: The College Board, 2nd ed. 1995 [1986]).

<sup>11</sup> Cicero, *De Oratore* (2 vols.), trans. E. W. Sutton, H. Rackham. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942, 1967).

wherein chiefly men are superior to animals?" (I. 32-33). If we allow for a certain overweening Roman pride and gendered language, it bears listening to ostensible requirements of oratorical education: "the subtlety of the logician, the thoughts of the philosopher, a diction almost poetic, a lawyer's memory, tragedian's voice, and the bearing of the consummate actor" (128). The complexity of learning to know is artfully cultivated, which, here, is to say that these attributes are selected because public communication demands them.

In Plato, each discipline was judged by what portion of the variety of its effects actually contributed to justice. Cicero, who still has an interest in justice, inverts the pursuit. Cicero emphasizes that expertise carries with it a communicative burden; experts speak only to themselves and, thus, have no way to make their contributions to the world available to the citizens: "Your natural science itself, your mathematics, and other studies which just now you reckoned as belonging peculiarly to the rest of the arts [other than rhetoric], do indeed pertain to the knowledge of their professors, yet if anyone should wish by speaking to put these same arts in their full light, it is to oratorical skill that he must run for help" (63).

Pervasive in this view of oratorical power is education.<sup>12</sup> Education happens through an artful interactive selection out of the products of human civilization. To see how this cultural selection happens, we must turn to the heart of rhetoric: its parts and its topics. The parts of Roman rhetoric were common, then, and are still a part of our culture's stock of, often, unused ideas: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. Applied in each part were considerations of a question: was it general or particular to a time and place? In either case, four issues arose; what was done, its character, the name it is known by, and whether it is within or without the law (139).<sup>13</sup> It is within this generalized, cross-tab framework that the issue concerning us, the education of a whole person, receives a 'topical' treatment from the art of rhetoric.

Commonplaces, *loci* in Latin, *topoi* in Greek, are the argumentative building blocks, the techniques, by which an orator inquires into a question in order to invent speech.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Contemporary schools of thought, where thinkers gathered to work on 'problems,' were somewhat structurally akin to our modern research institutes. Students sought teachers, but formalized collective, curricular schooling existed in the *ludens* (primary) and in the *grammaticus* (secondary) education, only. There were no universities and evidence of curricula at the level of these philosophy schools is scanty at best. There was, though, reading from the vast culture and studying with or being tutored by teachers, who sometimes lectured, within these schools, e.g., the Platonic Academy. Crassus frequented such schools and became familiar with professors of oratory, philosophy, physicists, mathematicians, and physicians, which he added to a study of law and Roman customs (45, 47, 48). From a modern point of view, the general situation is something like this: a person decides in the American system to get a bachelor's degree, a major, or in the European system a licentiate in rhetoric; of course, he or she consciously undertakes studies from the department or faculty that offers the major or the degree, obviously including a kind of pre-law set of courses, as well as courses on the art itself. But having been advised by an experienced orator of Crassus's ilk, the student also takes philosophy, mathematics, science, and literature courses which are selected on the basis of being part of the common parlance of social, cultural discourse. The selection is not random, nor is it monochromatic —only of one discipline—but artful, and is made, importantly, on the basis of the cultural commonality any of the above subjects achieve, not their specialization.

<sup>13</sup> A contrast to the more conventional and earlier work *De Inventione* can be drawn, here. See I. vii-xii.

<sup>14</sup> Commonplaces divide in Cicero, as they did in Aristotle, between general and special. An illustration of a general topic in Aristotle is that "concerned with 'the more or less' [i.e., the topic of degree]. On this line of argument it is equally easy to base a syllogism or enthymeme about any of what are nevertheless disconnected subjects." (*Rhetoric* I. 2, 1358a15). In Aristotle, topics are propositions fit into rhetorical forms of argument. In Cicero, general topics or commonplaces are arguments, not propositions, selected from or with application to the linguistic culture, e.g.: Antonius remarks, "If the problem concerns the whole subject, the general idea of it has be made plain by definition; for example, 'If sovereignty be the

The commonplaces or loci of Cicero's art are generated by the interaction of the parts of rhetoric and the cultural sources of the topics. This is illustrated by Crassus' discussion of style: "There is a single art of sculpture in which eminence was attained by Myron, Polyclitus, and Lysippus (...) A single art and method of painting, [but different in each superior painter. So, too] in oratory and language (...) Isocrates had grace of style, Lysias precision, Hyperides penetration, Aeschines sonorousness, Demosthenes force: which one of them is not eminent?" (III. 26-28). The examples of authors are chosen through an empirical feedback loop: they illustrate particular excellences arising from and leading to works selected for study.

How one studies is an important indicator of this education's vitality.<sup>15</sup> Crassus says, "the pen is the best and most eminent author and teacher of eloquence, and rightly so, [for] all the commonplaces (...) appear and rush forward as we are searching out and surveying the matter...and all the most brilliant ['thoughts and expressions'] must needs flow in succession to the point of the pen" (I. 151). Yes, but how to use the pen when one is a novice? "For my part, in daily exercises (...) I used to set myself [upon] some poetry, the most impressive to be found, or to read some speech as I could keep in memory, and then declaim upon the actual subject matter of my reading, choosing as far as possible different words." But great authors are great because they have already chosen the best word, so, Crassus "resolved (...) to translate freely from Greek speeches of the most eminent orators." While Americans have been cauterized in language by a separated continent, surely this practice is not very far from European tongues. "The result of reading these was that, in rendering into Latin what I had read in Greek, I not only found myself using the best words – and yet familiar ones – but coining by analogy certain words that would be new to our people" (I. 155).

If you think this education is not critical, think again: "We must also read the poets, acquaint ourselves with histories, study and peruse the masters and authors in every excellent art, and by way of practice – praise, expound, emend, criticize and confute them..." (158). The education is critical because it is artful, but it can be sharply contrasted to much of modern university treatment of these arts. At least in America, most of the undergraduate humanities education I witness has little or no connection between criticism and a thorough acquaintance with memory, translation, or declamation, nor is that education essentially turned outward toward artful participation in the wider culture; instead, it tends to imitate and reward practices of specialized disciplines.

In Cicero learning to be a knower is not a matter of justice, but a matter of speech —the whole educational selection of what to read or write across the sciences and arts. Prior to complexity of moral and intellectual interaction is the complex interaction of art and culture. Speech is a human faculty or power, capable of enormous personal development but only in an artfully constituted social system. The limited users of language limit their impact on society; the best users of language form the basis for further cultural invention and development. Speech is the key to discovering, knowing and making the culture out of which a people make decisions. In other words, the Isocrates-Cicero-Quintilian line of development of educating something like the whole person has its locus in a broad scope of carefully selected works —core texts, if you will— *to cultivate the human power of converse* with other human beings. The whole

---

grandeur and glory of the State, it was violated by the man who delivered up to the enemy an army of the Roman people, not by him who delivered the man that did it into the power of the Roman People" (II. 164).

<sup>15</sup> If for no other reason than that it might disabuse us of the notion that 19th Century liberal arts recitation pedagogy was much like the ancient's and revive, possibly, a lost pedagogy.

person, here, in the sense of the most exemplary person in the capacity of what makes us exceed the animals, is the one who has come to learn a command of language, who, consequently, can bring to bear the moral underpinnings of culture and the most recent advances or problems of the disciplines to the decisions that humans in their institutions make.

Let us jump to the modern debate about personhood within liberal education by considering a statement by that practical idealist, Wilhelm von Humboldt:

The concept of higher institutions of learning as the summit where everything that happens directly in the interest of moral culture of the nation comes together, rests on such institutions [i.e., universities] being designed as places where learning in the deepest and widest sense of the word [*Wissenschaft*] may be cultivated... It is a further characteristic of higher institutions of learning that they treat all knowledge as not a yet wholly solved problem and are therefore never done with investigation and research.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, in Humboldt, culture depends on the advance of learning deeply and broadly, or, reciprocally, on unending research in any area culture touches. We see that the educational problems of curricular selection and of learning to know in Plato and Cicero have not disappeared, and the putative collapse of all learning into university science had consequences for the ideas of the whole person, of what learning to know might be, and of liberal education in succeeding centuries.

John Cardinal Newman, as Rector of what is now University College of Dublin, wrote and delivered the lectures of what became the *Idea of a University* in 1852,<sup>17</sup> during a period when new universities were being founded and when specialization or professionalization competed with liberal education. Newman's contribution to the antecedents of the phrase, "educating the whole person," for better or worse, represents a major shift in liberal arts education discussion. Newman distinguished "teaching" the "diffusion and extension of knowledge" from "discovery" in "the advancement of knowledge" (Preface ix). The former function belongs to universities. When in Discourse 2 Newman makes his case that theology is a branch of knowledge, theology is assimilated six times to science and is separated, in its university functioning, from "useful arts."<sup>18</sup> The case is general; Newman's discussion nearly severs the notion of the arts from liberal education. Though the liberal arts make an unstructured appearance in the form of "conversation," this tenuous connection has real consequences in the *idea* of a university; the education becomes liberal through the student learning to place special subject matters within a larger scheme of universal knowledge, and the university becomes the model for society, but has no immediate causal connection to it.

In Newman, liberal education's business has become philosophical and theoretical—less attached to governance, practical action and productivity, and more attached to the structures of knowledge. So, the business of a university's teaching is not to specialize the student, though a student does settle on one or another subject (100), but to relate any subject to wider considerations of knowledge. Professors are to model such relations for students. Newman's idea of a university foreshadowed a few 20<sup>th</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Humanist without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt*, translated with an introduction by Marianne Dowan, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), 132.

<sup>17</sup> John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, ed. by Frank M. Turner, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), ix. Also, see, <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/idea/#contents>.

<sup>18</sup> Newman does use two quoted references to arts as an intellectual faculty or as a university subject which pre-date the rise of the modern university of Newman's time.

Century core text programs, but often remains far from most on-the-ground faculty or student experiences of today:

An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus (...) the student (...) profits by an intellectual tradition, which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects, and duly interprets for him those which he chooses. He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, (...) as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called 'Liberal.' A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom (par. 102).

Thus, there is theory —the principles and adjusted claims of disciplines that Newman mentions; there are study, subjects, professors, and students; and the education is liberal, free, and partakes of intellectual virtues. But there are no arts of living, arts of politics, or arts of rhetoric shaping the whole. In a very real sense, then, Newman is a marker of what it is to come to know without practical consequence.

It is true that in a separate lecture on "Christianity and Letters," Newman specifically celebrates the intellectual inheritance of the liberal arts arising from Greece and Rome. However, the lecture celebrates "the opening [of] the School of Philosophy and Letters, or, as it was formally called, of Arts" in Newman's new university (166). In short, disciplines other than the arts themselves will govern the teaching of the arts. This means that the arts in Newman's vision are turned toward the same ends as the sciences: "To advance the useful arts is one thing, and to cultivate the mind another. The simple question to be considered is, how best to strengthen, refine, and enrich the intellectual powers" (175).

In the *Idea of a University*, the liberal arts make only a shadow appearance. There is a kind of student dialectic that takes place in two forms within Newman's university. The first is a discourse of the soul that brings about intellectual enlightenment, illumination or enlargement:

In ['true enlargement of the mind'] (...) the elements of the physical and moral world, sciences, arts, pursuits, ranks, offices, events, opinions, individualities, are all viewed as one, with correlative functions, and as gradually by successive combinations converging, one and all, to the true centre (par.137).

The second dialectic takes place among the students themselves, and is a consequence of them inhabiting a residential college:

... a multitude of young men (...) are sure to learn one from another, even if there be no one to teach them; the conversation of all is a series of lectures to each, and they gain for themselves new ideas and views, fresh matter of thought, and distinct principles for judging and acting, day by day (...) [Such] teaching is necessary for our social being, and it is secured by a large school or a college; and this effect may be fairly called in its own department an enlargement of mind (146).

Through conversation, the university has become the model for the larger social world. The residential college, the university, the development of theoretical knowledge, and its disciplinary subjects have replaced Plato's city and Cicero's culture. An education in social intercourse within the college, gives Newman some confidence that his young men can go out into the world, with a "cultivated intellect (...) and noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life" as "connatural qualities of a larger

knowledge" (par. 120-121) wrought by this kind of liberal education, though no direct line of causation can be traced between education, career and, more importantly, public life. Even as Newman speaks of Philosophy, of "Thought and Reason exercised upon Knowledge" (p.101), of the enlarged mind's making "a comparison of ideas one with another, as they come before the mind, and a systematizing of them" (p.98) and the ability of a mind to draw relations to parts of knowledge and to generalize (p.98) from experience, observation, and facts, there is no art of knowing in Newman as there is practiced dialectic in Plato and systematic rhetoric in Cicero. We have a hint of epistemics, without any way to systematically inquire. Even allowing that Newman's "science" has something of the Aristotelian philosophic breadth, every conceivable intellectual function, save art, is employed by Newman to describe the synthesis towards freedom that liberal education, so conceived, achieves: "Such a power ['of building up ideas'] is the result of scientific formation of the mind; it is an acquired faculty of judgment, of clear-sightedness, of sagacity, of wisdom, of philosophical reach of mind, of intellectual self-possession and repose (...) the eye of the mind is the work of discipline and habit" (109).<sup>19</sup> Put differently, there are no arts producing enlightenment derived from the sciences, nor utility *outside* the university.

Newman never uses the term 'whole person,' but he adapts the word, "gentleman," to the kind of student knower indicated above. In Newman, learning to be a knower has retained considerable scope; the learner has become a person who can view all scientific knowledge and find, through a special knowledge he or she has acquired, a particular place for his or her subject within the world of knowledge. But, practical consequences are assumed or, by implication, are a function of leadership involving knowing. This whole person goes out into the world with a subject matter in hand, but the concerns of liberal education —without arts— are not organized toward specialization or utility, but toward enlightenment based in the circle of knowledge best exemplified by a university.

During and shortly after Newman's composition of the *Idea of a University*, "the whole man" began to appear as a locution used to describe the character that the American college produced in its largely male graduates. College presidents used "the whole man" to defend the liberal arts college against the growth and attacks *by universities* upon this peculiar American institution. George Peterson writing on *The New England College in the Age of the University*<sup>20</sup> notes the whole man's growth, development, and decline as a symbol of liberal education (Chapter 2, "The Whole Man", 27-51).<sup>21</sup> Its first lexically unannounced appearance Peterson identifies with the famous Yale Report of 1828 which stated that "the great object of a collegiate education is to give that expansion and balance of the mental powers, those liberal and comprehensive values, and those fine proportions of character, which are not to be found in him whose ideas are always confined to one particular channel" (quoted, 29). There is an echo here of Plato's moral and intellectual functions. But more importantly, in the New England of 1820-1870, American colleges grew out of a pluralism of largely

<sup>19</sup> Leaving aside all questions of metaphysics, if one were to assert that an "Aristotelian" concept of 'theoretical' ideas could be pursued through the corpus of Aristotle's treatises "down" to the practical and productive arts which he formulated, even if one were to tie the theoretical sciences to the productive arts because there was a theoretical connection of, say, analytics, dialectic, rhetoric, and poetics, why, then, are these arts ignored by Newman because of a contemporary argument with those who turn the university towards utility?

<sup>20</sup> Cf. George E. Peterson, *The New England College in the Age of the University* (Mherst: Amherst College Press, 1964).

<sup>21</sup> The sardonic treatment of colleges and college presidents, particularly, is somewhat leavened by Andrew Delbanco's recent work, *The College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*, on the underpinnings of democracy that these college afforded. Cf. p. 40 of Peterson to p.33 and 171.

Protestant denominations, so the colleges took great care to differentiate themselves one from another, especially through a senior year course on Christian morality. This course, doctrinally differentiated and oriented to the particular human faculties each institution thought worth cultivating, essentially synthesized the classical and mathematical education of the first three years into a course on “man himself as a physical, intellectual, moral and religious being” (from William College catalog, quoted p. 37), and put a particular stamp on each college’s graduates.

Peterson argues, however, that in stressing the Whole Man of *character*, the American college placed itself in an untenable position over and against universities. For example, Mark Hopkins, Williams College President, argued that “character must always be the college’s concern (...) the primary element is not intellectual (...) Character is above learning — wisdom above logic” (37). As colleges competed with universities, they came to lose even their doctrinal differentiation, and the descriptions of the whole man became increasingly unspecific: “The Whole Man [eventually] affirmed nothing. Gone was the harsh faith in Christian piety (...) Gone, too, was the austere doctrine of the Yale Report, which had countenanced the whole intellect more than a (now) gentlemanly Whole Man” (38). Though American colleges continued to require courses in classical texts in Latin and Greek, the tradition had become empty of ideas, relying in its learning on memory and retention without the criticism Crassus treasured in Cicero.<sup>22</sup> In short, if art disappeared in Newman, it became thoughtless practice in America, so little of learning to be a knower remained.

Notwithstanding Peterson’s critique, the differentiation of institutions along liberal educational lines through uses of the Whole Man trope and this senior year course is rarely appreciated in educational literature and has historically, deeply affected the shape and function of liberal arts in North America. Such differentiation, after some severe historical challenges, has continued and developed along religious and secular lines throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a large array of North American institutions, and there are some signs that renewed interest in Europe in liberal education is resulting in institutional differentiation via liberal education programs.<sup>23</sup> In a very real sense, the arts and sciences of ancient to modern liberal education, the history of the religious contribution to forms of knowledge, and the history of higher education institutions have yielded sets of differences not only in the education offered at various institutions but the way in which those institutions market themselves, indeed develop their reputations, for a wider public.

The influence of the German university, the American pursuit of industrial and democratic success, and the embrace by Charles Elliot —late 19<sup>th</sup> Century President of Harvard— of an elective system of courses nearly eviscerated the liberal arts traditions of America’s colleges which had formed much of the basis for the American students’ undergraduate university experience. The literature on education widely credits World War I and the “war courses” at Columbia University for returning American academics

<sup>22</sup> Timothy P. Cross, *An Oasis of Order: The Columbia Core Curriculum at Columbia College*, (New York, The Trustees of Columbia University, 1995). A general description of the emptiness of four years at Harvard is provided by Henry Adams, “The Education of Henry Adams”, in *Novels, Mont Saint Michel, The Education*, (New York: The Library of America, 1983, 2nd printing), 774-775.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of differentiation drawn from 1978 to 2002, see, “FINAL REPORT: ‘Assessing Trends in the Liberal Arts Core: A Vision for the 21st Century.’” The American Academy for Liberal Education. George R. Lucas, Jr., Project Director, J. Scott Lee Principal Investigator. U. S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (Washington, D.C., 2002), 9-10; available upon request.

to a re-consideration of a more unified undergraduate experience.<sup>24</sup> But the evidence suggests, in the figures of George Edward Woodbury, James Gutmann and John Erskine, that a dissatisfaction with the neglected role of the intellect within Anglo-American literature, religious controversies, and British Empire military disasters led these university professors to seek renewed liberal education before the war. This dissatisfaction was furthered by Erskine's perception of a wave of Romance language immigrants in America who, he said, possessed "a Greek love of knowledge [and] a Greek assurance that sin and misery are the fruit of ignorance."<sup>25</sup> In 1911, Erskine predicted that "our college men [would] be in the thick of" a fight to use intelligence to solve "the problems of our day." As Gutmann later put it, "'Students of exceptional ability whose intellectual interests are in what are still called the liberal arts, have not always been equally well-served' at [Columbia's] College as students pursuing careers in other disciplines."<sup>26</sup> Thus, it was that these Columbia University professors attempted to revive —in translation— the older, literary tradition of classical texts in order to bring to the fore a locus of ideas, in literature, quite different from and more immediate than Newman's theoretical array of sciences. This effort laid the groundwork for an attempt to re-introduce the liberal arts at the University of Chicago, twenty years later.

It would be a mistake to think that only Americans concerned themselves with liberal arts education. Further, the dissatisfaction with universities scope and application of intelligence was not confined to America, and, in Europe, the whole man soon received a new birth. José Ortega y Gasset, in his 1930 work, *The Mission of the University*, pins reform of the Spanish university upon educating the "whole man" or educating the "European man."<sup>27</sup> Finding that that higher education consisted in the teaching of learned professions and scientific research, including the preparation of future researchers ("investigators" 24), Ortega argues that without reform the university was contributing to, perhaps chiefly responsible for,

...the astounding spectacle [at 'the beginning of the twentieth century'] of how brutal, how stupid, and yet how fundamentally aggressive is the man learned in one thing and fundamentally ignorant of all else. Professionalism and specialism (...) have smashed the European man in pieces (...) the whole man is not to be found in this 'fragment' called the 'engineer' (...) Indeed, the crumbling away of Europe which we are witnessing is the result of the invisible fragmentation that the European man has progressively undergone" (32, and 28).

Ortega's basic solution was to re-constitute the "whole man" through the "transmission of culture" within the university, this function taking priority over teaching learned professions and scientific research (33; and 76). In a situation where the university offers endless branches of knowledge to teach, the expedient, economic means are to recognize that the capacity to learn by students is limited and, therefore, to base transmission of culture on student capacities rather than on professors or subjects being investigated or specialized in: this limitation turns on five subjects: Physics, Biology, History, Sociology, and Philosophy (49).

<sup>24</sup> For example, see Michael Nelson, ed., *Celebrating the Humanities: A Half-Century of the Search Course at Rhodes College*, (Nashville T.N.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), 5-6.

<sup>25</sup> John Erskine, "The Moral Obligation To Be Intelligent." <http://keever.us/erskine.html>

<sup>26</sup> Timothy P. Cross, *An Oasis of Order: The Columbia Core Curriculum at Columbia College* (New York: The Trustees of Columbia University, 1995) 25-26.29.

<sup>27</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Mission of the University*, ed. and trans. by Howard Lee Nostrand, (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1997 [1944]), 32.

However modern Ortega's concerns appear,<sup>28</sup> he is reaching back into the liberal arts past to find solutions. In a reference to which he recurs several different times (27, 60, 64), Ortega notes that the ancient Greek notion of an “[*h*]odos and *methodos*” was an intellectual “via” or “way” to locate “the system of ideas, concerning the world and humanity, which the man of [any] time possesses.” The term *hodos methodos*, rendered in English as ‘in-arted method’ in some translations, appears in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* as a description of the art.<sup>29</sup> In Ortega’s hands, these ways become a systematized inquiry of how to use and live in ideas framed by the subjects listed above (27).

In Ortega’s university, a “Faculty of Culture” works synthetically; their job is not to expound [a discipline] as [it] is presented to a student intending to devote his life to [that discipline’s] research. [Instead, each subject in] culture is the rigorously derived synthesis of ideas about the nature and functioning of [that part of the world represented by one of the five subjects]. In addition, [each] discipline will analyze the means of acquiring knowledge (...) and it will trace briefly but scrupulously, the course of their historical evolution (66).

Lest we think Ortega is advocating a reified teaching for dummies, we should pay attention to his comments on what is involved in the cultural idea of physics: “Physics, and its method, is one of the essential instruments for the modern mind. Into that science have gone four centuries of intellectual discipline, and its doctrine is intimately connected with the cultured man’s concept of God and society, of matter and that which is not matter, together with all the other essentials for an enlightened life” (30). For Ortega, this curriculum has a practical implication which is not present in Newman: “Every human being, perforce, picks his way through life, [‘to make a plan’] (...) But this plan (...) requires that we have acquired some ‘idea’ of the world and the things in it, and also of our potential acts which have bearing upon it” (61-62). Further, in possession of this outlined curriculum, each student enters the world not only able to navigate its culture but to participate in governing the culture (29). As one might suspect from the faculty he proposes and his description of what culture is, for Ortega governing is itself a cultural function, but not necessarily a political or legal authority; instead, the pressure of cultural influence is exerted ‘upon the body politic’ and by those who possess “power to make their lives a vital influence.” Consequently, the rhetorical function of Ortega’s analysis actually ends his book in an odd place. If the function of research publishing is removed from a Faculty of Culture, where does publishing reappear? It reappears in challenging the press, not only by offering courses, but, by implication, continuing to educate the public through public discourse (81).

Newman’s concern with theoretical, universal knowledge unconnected to practical concerns, and his stipulation of an intellectual enlightenment that would carry graduates forward into their social life have been reformulated in Ortega in terms that hark back to ancient rhetorical arts, but which rely on cooperating faculty imbued with the capacity to explicate the cultural, largely contemporary, ideas of fundamental disciplines. Ortega’s program turns the Faculty of Culture and, possibly, some of its publication towards public, not disciplinary, fora. The consequence, unlike that painted by Peterson, is that the whole man or whole person emerges as the culturally aware population which, aided by the university, has the great project of carrying on the achievements of culture while resisting its fragmentation.

<sup>28</sup> Including an anticipation of mass university education (23, 30).

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. by Richard McKeon. (New York: Random House, 1941, 1971) (I.i. 1355a 5ff).

Learning to be a knower —that is, recovering the whole person—is to be able to give an account of how knowledge is acquired in five disciplines, and to trace and explicate the living ideas of each discipline within the cultural pre-occupations of the times. Though Ortega’s analysis of the mission of the university is essentially a rhetorical formulation of cultural restoration, his university’s devotion to science means the *loci, the topoi* of Ortega’s proposal exclude, especially, intelligence derived from literature, ancient to modern, which Erskine and Columbia so prized.

Inheriting the Columbia orientation, shortly after Ortega delivered his lectures, the President of the University of Chicago, Robert Maynard Hutchins became embroiled in a controversy about the nature of a university and, particularly, its General Education. Elsewhere, I have outlined some flexibilities or joints in his argument that I think were overlooked by Hutchins opponents.<sup>30</sup> For our purposes, these include that while Hutchins retained Newman’s concern with theoretical knowledge, while he accepted Newman’s rejection of professional schools or Ortega’s subordination of them to research functions, Hutchins made the function of general education, through explicit use of liberal arts and great works of culture, a means by which the university faculty could and would discuss the flow of ideas from one discipline to another. Through this liberal-arted, core text conversation, Hutchins advocated for the increasingly broader, more interdisciplinary nature of research, which was the unique contribution of a university proper to a democracy. Hutchins does not address whether the faculty participating in the General Education program would be able to speak to the public about their research.

Hutchins General Education proposal was attacked by many, but for our purposes we will focus on an economics professor, Harry Gideonse, from the University of Chicago, who in representing his argument as the faculty’s argument against Hutchins, discussed the in-place general education program which Gideonse characterized as “educating the whole man.”<sup>31</sup> The attack on Hutchins involves four assertions:

(1) Hutchins’ reliance on metaphysics to be the pinnacle of ordered studies in the university is hopelessly arbitrary (5) and anti-scientific (6).

(2) “...the scientific approach has been gaining acceptance as the guiding principle for the intellectual activities of Western man,” and this involves submission by university curricula to the “new data and new tools of intelligence” which lead to “new systems of greater generality” (8).

(3) Reading classics in science is inadequate to “college training in science” (9).

(4) And within the realm of human culture, current human dilemmas “demand the ability to use the best tools at hand.” (9) So it is that Gideonse comes to a demonstration of the Chicago general education curriculum as better than Hutchins’ proposal as the “education of a whole person, [...] eschewing the isolated and exclusive cultivation of the intellect as such” (12).

Gideonse turns to a faculty description and justification of the program. Chicago had been organized into three divisions constituting four fields and many disciplines: physical and biological science, social sciences, and the humanities. General education courses met the objective of “introducing the student to the main fields of knowledge,” as well as the “problems and methods of approach involved in the study” of the subject matters of these fields or divisions (13). The tug-of-war within the university about

<sup>30</sup> J. Scott Lee, “Rethinking Universities and Hutchins: Faculty and Student Resistance to Core Texts.” Lecture delivered at Shimer College, on Feb. 7, 2011. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=As5I\\_pgPiQA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=As5I_pgPiQA)

<sup>31</sup> Harry D. Gideonse, *The Higher Learning in a Democracy*, (New York, Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937).

what satisfied the two criteria surfaces in the faculty description: “A large part of the more intensive training which we [the faculty] regard as an essential part of a general education is provided by the several departmental or divisional sequences available to College students.” UC never had only one set of courses all students took, and the reference to “intensive training” coupled to the difference between “departmental or divisional sequences” indicates a division of opinion across the faculty as to what constituted general education. Gideonse cites a further proposed innovation: “an experimental philosophy course to be staffed by members drawn from the four general fields as well as from the philosophy department” (13-14). Eventually, a famous course at the University did emerge which incorporated the sweep, or “integration,” if not the instructors from four fields, that the faculty were considering.<sup>32</sup> Gideonse remarks, perhaps skeptically, that the materials of the course “would ultimately react to the advantage of the general courses in so far as any significant synthesis of methods and values emerges from the joint enterprise” (14).

Gideonse leaves out that, particularly within the humanities division, there was significant interest, though frequent disagreement, with Hutchins’ program of reading great texts of the West; this interest included at least some employment of the liberal arts, less in their rhetorical form and more in their dialectical<sup>33</sup> or grammatical form.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>35</sup> In this broad sense, then, we see that the education of the whole man, at least at the University of Chicago, was trying to accommodate widely divergent epistemics in a “state of the art” institution. Gideonse, as a social scientist, has his own criterion, drawn from Dewey (cf. 31) for selecting materials within a four years that simply cannot attend to the whole of accumulated knowledge: “Other things being equal, the test for deciding the inclusion or exclusion of a given subject matter in the curriculum must be its significance for living the life of our society” (14). There are other alternatives; Gideonse notes his criteria would trump universality or permanence as a criterion of inclusion (15), but Gideonse is a social scientist, an economist, a presentist. What emerges out of the program is, at once, an admirable but fractured sense of educating the whole man. The divisions, working within their own set of departments, were allowed to range as broadly or narrowly as they wished to design their offerings in general education, about half of a four-year curriculum. Yes, an introduction to modern, scientific, very specific, technical education is offered. Yes, an introduction to a broad historical development of cultural ideas and arts, treating them as still worthy of thought and investigation, is offered.

Learning to be a knower involves the students in these various applications. But apparent in this astoundingly thoughtful general education program is the problem of

<sup>32</sup> For a day-to-day example of the entire course, see the whole book by Richard P. McKeon, *On Knowing: The Natural Sciences*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), especially p.1 and 381. For the faculty acceptance of the course, see *The Idea and Practice of General Education: An Account of the College at the University of Chicago*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1950) 232-245. 253-255.

<sup>33</sup> Op cit., McKeon.

<sup>34</sup> See, Richard P. McKeon, “Criticism and the Liberal Arts: the Chicago School of Criticism,” *Profession*, 6 (1982): 1-18.

<sup>35</sup> Also, Bruce Kimball notes that attempt at Chicago by disparate members of and visitors to the faculty to try to develop a liberal arts curriculum. The meeting designed to do this ended in such rancor that the members never met again as a committee on this topic, but personality or rancor aside, it is possible to trace out the lineaments of the disagreement (never fully published or explained) by examining writings on liberal arts subjects by the participants, including McKeon, Mortimer Adler, and Stringfellow Barr. Differently put, it should surprise no one familiar with liberal arts history within or without the context of educational institutions that the curricular conceptions of the liberal arts might be pluralistically incompatible within one committee.

“educating the whole man”: is there any way to relate the relevance of the sciences to the innovative traditions of the humanities? Hutchins problem, a problem centrally involved in using the liberal arts, still remains: what languages would the various disciplines or the students use to talk to each other about shared problems? What would prevent one discipline, one field from simply trying to dominate the discourse on education cutting across many fields?<sup>36</sup> With the important exception of the integration course which developed after Gideonse wrote, his whole man is a bit like someone being drawn and quartered, and much of subsequent so-called liberal education has, frankly, done nothing but encourage the horses to move farther afield. Consequently, the integration course is important because (a) it was a humanistic treatment of (b) problems from all divisions of knowledge and, as such, retained the aspiration towards a comprehensive view of learning to know.

So far, I have had to leave out much, most notably the Jesuit tradition of *cura personalis*, as well as scattered, diffuse website-based uses of the “educating the whole person” at this moment in time. Most importantly, I have not pursued that part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century American *college* story which did invoke and use liberal arts texts.<sup>37</sup> With the background provided, my aim is to show how, substantively and rhetorically, liberal arts education and the humanities, in particular, could be of use to Building Universities’ Reputations through paying careful attention to “educating the whole person.” We—that is, liberal arts educators belonging to universities—could make a coherent, actional promise to produce graduates who have learned to be knowers in the sense that Cicero and Ortega seem best to exemplify. This doesn’t mean that Plato, Newman, Hutchins, or Gideonse are to find no place in our liberal arts programs, and it does mean that ethics, religion, literature, and science are all to be taken into account by a humanistic, liberal arts education using core texts, where core texts are world classics of the various arts and sciences, ancient to modern, from the West and, increasingly, other major linguistic civilizations.

Just as this paper has shown theoretically and practically that the liberal arts have been used to differentiate educations at institutions, so those differentiations can be marketed and their intellectual fruits can be laid before the public. But for the humanities to contribute to building any university’s reputation, they must take their cues from Cicero and Ortega, they must resurrect the arts, particularly the liberal arts, as their primary concerns, their chief set of methods, and, of course, the center of their studies. If *this kind* of learning to be a knower is to happen, the humanities will need to start educating and writing for a public, not for a plethora of specialized disciplines.

The humanities have only writing and speech, supplemented by visual and auditory artefacts, to make the broad cases about culture, arts and science, and individuals which mark the interests of the humanities.<sup>38</sup> The sciences and the social sciences enjoy the same means of communication and have discoveries and technologies that are readily apparent to the public, frequently referred to in the press, and sometimes widely used by the public. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that humanities research and publication has exploded, but the propulsion is within the academy, not outward to our communities. Worse yet, evidence suggests strongly that almost all of the publication

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., William O’Meara in *The Idea and Practice of General Education* (op.cit.), p. 233.

<sup>37</sup> This small group of undergraduate higher education institutions includes St. John’s College, Shimer College, and Thomas Aquinas College, as well as others. That said, these institutions are much more indebted to Newman and Hutchins than to Cicero or Ortega.

<sup>38</sup> Yes, the humanities can competently address knowledge of math and science, but the technology that the humanities produce is overwhelmingly linguistic, visual or auditory. The humanities produce their own discoveries, occasionally, but they do not produce the discoveries and technology of science.

goes unread by anyone —inside or out of humanities disciplines— except, of course, the editors and reviewers of academic presses and journals.<sup>39</sup> Finally and damningly, at least in America, we are producing undergraduates who cannot communicate to the outside world what we have taught them because, leaving aside whether their education is fractured and superficial, they cannot write.<sup>40</sup>

The Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) is an international organization of colleges and universities dedicated to the use of core texts —texts of foundational or seminal nature to all disciplines or fields— within liberal arts education. At ACTC, we have numerous programs from around the world which are core text, liberal education, but not liberal arts, programs. Many of them claim to educate the whole person and their models of education, directly or indirectly are drawn from Plato, Newman, and Hutchins. While they exhibit faculty across disciplines working together, my own survey of 20 years of papers given at ACTC indicate that their reading lists almost never include the core texts of the liberal arts, ancient to modern, in theory or in practice, that would lead students to contemplate the power of artistic representation before a wider public.<sup>41</sup>

If humanistic education is going to enhance the reputation of universities —and it can do this— we are going to have to start publishing in newspapers, social and mass media, and speaking in local venues, as Ortega seems to suggest, or those other mass venues now so readily available to us. Our disciplines will help but are insufficient. *We need to re-learn the liberal arts as a public means of public expression and a public education*, one in which all who wish to think may partake. If we begin to speak in broad terms about the intersection of various disciplines, if we write in terms that are clear and intelligible to a public, if we show that moderns have something to learn from the ancients and that in learning from them we are learning to be knowers, we will find that “educating the whole person” becomes a living phrase that our universities and the public can join hands over well into the future.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Henry. “The Education of Henry Adams”, in *Novels, Mont St. Michele, The Education*. Library of America, 1983, 2nd printing.
- Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. Translated by W. Rhys Roberts. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited with an introduction by Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941, 1971.

<sup>39</sup> Mark Bauerlein, *Literary Research: Costs and Impact*. (Washington: Center for College Affordability and Productivity. Policy paper, November, 2011): 1. In ERIC <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED536156>

<sup>40</sup> Verlyn Klinkeborg, member of the editorial board of the New York Times, has taught at many top flight colleges and universities. In an essay on the “Decline and Fall of the English Major,” he notes that the “kind of writing —clear, direct, humane— and the reading on which it is based are the very root of the humanities,” but that students, today, cannot produce clear writing. He adds, brutally, “the humanities do a bad job of teaching the humanities” largely because “writing well used to be a fundamental principle of the humanities...” [my emphasis]. Of course, the problems of the humanities are more general than problems of the English major. And here is where the shoe really begins to pinch. Arum and Roksa’s *Academically Adrift* found in national samplings that “three semesters of college education [...] have a barely noticeable impact on students’ skills in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing.”

<sup>41</sup> These would be works that are specifically directed to the art, the *techne*, of liberal arts. Authors would range ancient to modern, from Plato to Bruni, to Sontag, and such works would be represented by the *Phaedrus*, *Rhetoric*, *De Inventione*, *On Christian Doctrine*, *Institutiones*, on up to *Understanding Media*, and *Against Interpretation*.

- Bauerlein, Mark. *Literary Research: Costs and Impact*. Washington: Center for College Affordability and Productivity. Policy paper, November, 2011. In ERIC <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED536156>
- Cicero. *De Oratore*. Translated by E. W. Sutton, H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942, 1967.
- Cicero. *De Inventione*. Translated by H. M. Hubbell. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949, 1968.
- Cross, Timothy P. *An Oasis of Order: The Columbia Core Curriculum at Columbia College*. New York: The Trustees of Columbia University, 1995.
- Delbanco's, Andrew. *The College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Erskine, John. "The Moral Obligation To Be Intelligent" in *American Character and Other Essays*. Chautauqua, NY: The Chautauqua Press, 1927. <http://keever.us/erskine.html>
- Gideonse, Harry D. *The Higher Learning in a Democracy*. New York, Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937.
- Humboldt, Wilhelm von. *Humanist without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt*. Translated with an introduction by Marianne Dowan. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963.
- Kimball, Bruce A. *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education*. New York: The College Board, 2nd ed. 1995 [1986].
- Klinkeborg, Verlyn. "Decline and Fall of the English Major." *New York Times*, June 22, 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/23/opinion/sunday/the-decline-and-fall-of-the-english-major.html>
- Lee, J. Scott. "Rethinking Universities and Hutchins: Faculty and Student Resistance to Core Texts." Lecture delivered at Shimer College, on Feb. 7, 2011. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=As5I\\_pgPiQA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=As5I_pgPiQA)
- Lucas, George R. (Project Director) and J. Scott Lee (Principal Investigator). "Final report: 'Assessing Trends in the Liberal Arts Core: A Vision for the 21st Century.'" The American Academy for Liberal Education. U. S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. Washington D.C., 2002.
- McKeon, Richard P. "Criticism and the Liberal Arts: the Chicago School of Criticism," *Profession*, 6 (1982), 1-18.
- McKeon, Richard P. *On Knowing: The Natural Sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Nelson, Michael (ed.). *Celebrating the Humanities: A Half-Century of the Search Course at Rhodes College*. Nashville T.N.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996.
- Newman, John Henry. *The Idea of a University*. Edited by Frank M. Turner. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. *Mission of the University*. Edited and translated by Howard Lee Nostrand. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1997 [1944].
- Peterson, George E. *The New England College in the Age of the University*. Amherst: Amherst College Press, 1964.
- Plato. *The Republic of Plato*. Translated, with notes and an interpretative essay, by Allan Bloom. New York: Basic Books, 1968.
- Present and former members of the faculty. *The Idea and Practice of General Education: An Account of the College at the University of Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1950.

Wende, Marijk van der. "The Emergence of Liberal Arts and Sciences Education in Europe: A Comparative Perspective," *Higher Education Policy*, 24 (2011), 237-253.

Working Group of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard College. Report "The Teaching of the Arts and Humanities at Harvard College: Mapping the Future." Cambridge MA: Harvard University, 2013.

---

**Documentos Core Curriculum, n.11, 2019.**

**ISBN:** 978-84-8081-628-1

**Cómo citar este artículo:** Lee, J. Scott. "On educating the whole person, or learning to be a knower." [Documentos Core Curriculum](#), 11 (2019) URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/10171/56525>



*Los Documentos Core Curriculum se publican bajo una licencia Creative Commons Reconocimiento-NoComercial-SinObraDerivada 3.0 España.*