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The Value of Humanities Education and What Higher Education Must Do to Keep it Alive

Stephen A. Yang

2008

We must somehow communicate the need to curb our material dream and work toward an agreement concerning our unavoidable future. For such a future, we need to reconceptualize a universally shared culture, as we have never done in human history. -Masao Miyoshi

We're operating in a period in which the notion of deep thinking and analysis simply is not valued…larger forces out there are emphasizing instead emotion, quickness, fear. -Sandra Greene

America's quaint history reveals that at one time, its colleges placed education models designed to foster virtue and humanity at the forefront of their curricula. In our present day, however, colleges fail in this endeavor insofar as general education is concerned. A greater percentage of work-bound college graduates who assimilate into democratic citizenship are malnourished and ignorant about the meaning of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness because they lack general education. To be clear, this is not to say that students do not care for the meaning of life or the structure of the society they will inherit, rather, they simply aren't being provided with the tools and encouragement they need in order to do a prolonged and in-depth search for the purpose and meaning of their lives. Students who are interested in humanist pedagogies often find themselves pupils without teachers and for the few who are lucky enough to have attained tutelage, upon completion, wise without bankable skills. This disparaging reality of 21st century higher education is rooted in the fact that we judge the quality of our universities by how successful their graduates turn out to be. On a broad scale we have been conditioned to measure them in terms of the material quantities and/or reputations they do or do not achieve throughout their post-college years.

The urgency to train a learned populace initially powered the headlights that were to guide higher education's journey into the future. History suggests that the administrators of America's earliest universities would have most likely opposed modern as well as post-modern attitudes towards education. To them, reputable names ran a distant second to the creation of a learned democratic citizenry. Early curriculums were modeled after those used during the humanist revival period of the seventeenth century. Anthony T. Kronman, Sterling Professor of

Law at Yale Law School and the former Dean of the college observes that the founders of Harvard University felt as if "the purpose of…college [was] to shape its students' souls. In their minds, a college [was] above all a place for the training of character, for the nurturing of those intellectual and moral habits that together [formed] the basis for living the best life one can."[1] Nurturing 'intellectual' and 'moral' habits, they believed, could only have been achieved through a critical study of the human condition, which today operates under three titles: "General Education," "Liberal Arts," and the most widely accepted title, "the Humanities."

What exactly are the Humanities? The Humanities are essentially discourses of study centered on humanist pedagogies.[2] Franklin Crawford gives a general overview of the Humanities at Cornell University:

> Here's how it works at Cornell: At least 14 departments within the College of Arts and Sciences…English, Philosophy and Classics, to name the old guard. In keeping with the historic flexibility of the term, the humanities at Cornell also embrace areas of study that include the social sciences. Examples of these areas include Government, History, Art History and Near Eastern Studies, as well as the Department of Art in the College of Architecture, Art and Planning.

Established by Faculty Senate legislation in 1994, The University of Rhode Island has a Center for the Humanities of its own, which seeks to "foster intellectual exchange and independent inquiry, analysis, and interpretation of the humanities in research, teaching, and learning." The Humanities are characterized by specific areas of scholarship which include:

> • History, Anthropology, and Archaeology [that] study human, social, political, and cultural developments, as do aspects of the Social Sciences that use historical or philosophical approaches.
>
> • Literature, Languages, and Linguistics, as well as certain approaches to Journalism and Communication Studies, [that] explore how we communicate with each other, and how our ideas and thoughts on the human experience are expressed and interpreted.
>
> • Philosophy, Ethics, and Comparative Religion [that] consider ideas about the meaning of life and the reasons for our thoughts and actions.
>
> • Jurisprudence [that] examines the values and principles which inform our laws.

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[1] Kronman, Anthony T. Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. 49.
[2] Crawford, Franklin (May 18, 2005) "Ah the humanities – what *are* they?" News Release. Retrieved on 2008-3-12

> • Critical and theoretical approaches to and practice of the Arts [that] explore historical or philosophical questions and reflect upon the creative process.

Overall, the Center for the Humanities at the University of Rhode Island describes the Humanities as:

> Themes and contents…the stories, the ideas, and the words that help us understand our lives and our world. They introduce us to people we have never met, places we have never visited, and ideas that may never have crossed our minds. By showing how others have lived and thought about life, the humanities help us decide what is important and what we can do to make our own life and the lives of others better. By connecting us with other people, the humanities point the way to answers about what is ethical and what is true to our diverse heritage, traditions, and history. They help us address the challenges we face together as families, communities, and nations.[3]

Schools that value the liberal arts as an essential part of their curriculums, therefore, have no doubt adopted the attitude from academia's deep historical roots. They provide us with evidence suggesting the immediate utility of ethics, democracy, and art in the academy. American higher education's history is a testament to general education's capacity to serve society by strengthening it and bettering its citizens. Amherst College, for example, still maintains a strong liberal arts curriculum even after its establishment in 1821. Peter R. Pouncey, the President of Amherst College from 1984-1994 remarks that:

> A university or a liberal arts college, quite apart from any religious affiliations, is pledged to a special faith of its own. It believes first that men and women can live together in a community where they teach and learn from each other….A good college seeks not merely a coterie of the like-minded, to reinforce convictions already formed, but seeks out every vein of talent and opinion from every possible background, so that from the ferment of ideas freely exchanged it can advance to new conclusions. Those who teach and those who learn and those who support both with their work are thus bound together in a common endeavor, with each other and with all those similarly engaged.[4]

Yet despite higher education's optimistic beginnings, there is now a fairly low impetus on the part of many university administrators to parse education into equal parts so that broad-based knowledge can be gained. Furthermore, the colleges that value the Humanities as a central part

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[3] About the Humanities. 12 Mar. 2008. The University of Rhode Island Center for the Humanities Website. <http://www.uri.edu/artsci/cfh/about_humanities.shtml>

[4] Amherst's Philosophy. 12 Mar. 2008. The Amherst College Website. <https://cms.amherst.edu/aboutamherst/philosophy?

of their programs are growing increasingly rare. I contend that administrations have buckled under the pressure of having to adapt to the technology revolution of the 21st century. General education still exists as a requirement for students, but there is no enthusiasm supporting it. Aside for the fearless few, even administrators and instructors who understand general education's value aren't vocal about why. Now more than ever, education models that focus on intellectual property have smothered the value and practicality of the Humanities.

New models revolve around what are called vocational majors, majors that that serve the purpose of training students to be active participants in their communities by bringing expertise to particular trades. For example, students in pharmacy, nursing, business, the natural sciences, and social sciences, acquire a set of very specialized skills. They then carry those skills into the workforce and use them to the benefit of their employers. So when a college is brought up during conversation, thoughts about how effectively it will depart specialized trade skills, teach students how to network, score internships in preparation for future jobs and careers, are typically the first that come to mind. The looming fear of having to choose what to do in the "real world" after graduation weighs heavily upon students, who in response, select majors that appear to have the most practical value and most apparent rewards.

American capitalism perpetuates value-based attitudes, nourishing the illusion that happy living can be achieved by the acquisition of higher paying jobs, material goods, and status. Although it is true that college can provide students with the necessary tools they need to succeed on this front, it is also true that college can bequeath students with knowledge that will broaden their perspectives on life, teach them how to be critical thinkers, good communicators, and better people. The demand for students with high caliber skills has been strengthened by the global market of the 21st century. Competition has jumpstarted an industry race, prompting a

demand for skilled and indispensible workers. Desires to reign supreme in the world have placed pressure on universities to train students for work-life by creating and utilizing what Masao Miyoshi calls "university-industry alliances." Affiliations between corporations and universities have now become an accepted norm and universities are now more prone to propagate the ethics of the companies they align themselves with. Political divisions between departments and the devaluation of the humanities are a result of the mounting pressure placed on academia from companies with vested interests in intellectual property.

At present, conflicts are so pervasive in academia and society that frustrations, egos, and self interests trump higher goals. Higher education's administrators and framework suffer from the "first-generation symptom," described by Dr. Bernard Lafayette Jr., as the feeling that traditions must be respected, applied, and carried forth into the future.[5] These traditions were outlined by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who once said:

> Mammoth productive facilities with computer minds, cities that engulf the landscape and pierce the clouds, planes that almost outrace time-these are awesome, but they cannot be spiritually inspiring. Nothing in our glittering technology can raise man to new heights, because material growth has been made an end in itself, and, in the absence of moral purpose, man himself becomes smaller as the works of man become bigger. Gargantuan industry and government, woven into an intricate computerized mechanism, leave the person outside. The sense of participation is lost, the feeling that ordinary individuals influence important decisions vanishes, and man becomes separated and diminished.
>
> When an individual is no longer a true participant, when he no longer feels a sense of responsibility to his society, the content of democracy is emptied. When culture is degraded and vulgarity enthroned, when the social system does not build security but induces peril, inexorably the individual is impelled to pull away from a soulless society. This process produces alienation-perhaps the most pervasive and insidious development in contemporary society.[6]

The "first-generation symptom" denies and retards the natural changes that occur in people and the structures they inhabit. A complete education acknowledges and shares diverse

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[5] I would like to make light of the fact that these traditions are not the same as those perpetuated during America's early history. I cite the "first-generation symptom" in the sense that the new ethics born out of the technological age have transformed into and become tradition. They are outlined by the excerpt from a speech made by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

[6] King Jr., Martin Luther. The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr. Selected by Coretta Scott King. New York: Newmarket Press, 1967. 5-6.

perspectives. It does not seek to control and perpetuate ideologies. Most of all it is not purist. If changes occur in all instances and at all moments, the "first-generation symptom" as a structure, cannot work.

Change and methodology should be considered relative. As our society changes, so should our methods of educating our people. In light of this relationship I hope to draw attention to both *how* we teach and *what* we teach in higher education. To sideline the most pressing questions of human existence and purpose for technical training is to do a disservice to all human beings both on a micro and macro level. If methods of presenting educational material foster negativity, defensiveness, and competition, individuals may succeed, but their communities will suffer. The uninformed and divided majority seeking happiness, peace, and liberation through mutual independence will never reach its goal. It must learn to co-exist and inter-be.

Students and higher education administration should not forget that both society and individuals can benefit from education models that value the humanities. Individuals sufficiently educated by the Humanities will live more fulfilling lives, gain a broader perspective of the world, and have a higher resistance to the addiction of superficial pursuits. Currently the Ann S. Bowers Professor of English at Cornell University, Poet and Writer Alice Fulton remarks, "'I think part of our reason to be as humanists and artists is to resist the culture if it needs to be resisted, not to cave, not to react, but to be proactive, to be what I've called 'culturally incorrect.'" Shawkat M. Tooraw, Associate Professor of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies, also at Cornell University, furthers Bower's argument by begging the question, "what does it mean to be human?" and answering it by concluding, "being human is in fact seeing, hearing,

reading and telling, and these things are not always obvious. The Humanities play a critical role…in teaching human beings how to be better participants in human society." [7]

Communities are heading towards a future where they will be dependent on each other in order to survive, therefore, interdependent attitudes required to deal with these changes. Even in the 1963, from the steps the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. presaged that the world would head towards a new level of interconnectedness in the context of the Civil Rights Movement. King proclaimed that:

> In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone.[8]

Furthermore, King was "cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states" making the case that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. What affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial 'outside agitator' idea."[9] His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso furthered King's reasoning during an interview with Charlie Rose in 2005. Regarding the concept of a "just war," Gyatso contended that "in ancient times, maybe [we could justify] war. Now, today, [in the] world [there is a] new reality. Now the whole world has become like one small planet. Everything is interdependent. Now the United States, [whether] economically or ecologically…depends on

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[7] Crawford, Franklin (May 19, 2005) "Emphasizing the 'human' in humanities, Scholars seek 'common-sense' touch." News Release. Retrieved on 2008-3-12

[8] King Jr., Martin Luther. "I Have A Dream." I Have A Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed The World. Ed. James M. Washington, San Fransisco: HarperCollins, 1992. 101-7

[9] King Jr., Martin Luther. "Letter From Birmingham Jail" 10 May 2008. <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf>

other continents. So that's [the] new reality." Applying King's clairvoyance and the Dalai Lama's wisdom to today's education system reveals that instructional methods and attitudes which foster divisiveness during periods that demand harmony do a disservice to idea of community.

The world is rife with conflict and the loss of human life due to extremism is often brought about when individuals lack global perspectives while working on a local level. Generally speaking we are more prone to react to the manifestations of problems rather than the conditions that cause them. World War II, for example, began during the early 20th century when the Weimar Republic left Germany in shambles with high unemployment rates and poverty. Widespread civic discontent ultimately allowed for Adolf Hitler to proclaim Germany's autonomy in the world. Prideful national sentiments eventually lead to the inhumane ethnic cleansing of six million Jews. The arrival of western ships to its coastline in the late 19th century threw the underdeveloped nation of Japan into trepidation. Jumping into the automation race with the West, Japan decided that its future as a country could be best sustained by obtaining the land, natural resources, and human productivity of China. In 1937 Japan obliterated the city of Nanjing, raping and killing at least 200,000 Chinese in the name of the emperor and a zealous sense of nationalism.

It should be clear that those who are unaware of the interconnectedness of the world are more prone to perpetuate problems. As noted by the venerable H. Gunaratana Mahathera in his book *Mindfulness In Plain English*, ignorance plagues the vast majority:

> There you are, and you suddenly realize that you are spending your whole life just barely getting by. You keep up a good front. You manage to make ends meet somehow and look OK from the outside. But those periods of desperation, those times when you feel everything caving in on you, you keep those to yourself. You are a mess. And you know it. But you hide it beautifully. Meanwhile, way down under all that, you just know there has got to be some other way to live, some better way to look at the world, some way to touch life more fully. You click into it by chance now and then. You get a good job. You fall in love. You

> win the game. And for a while, things are different. Life takes on a richness and clarity that makes all the bad times and humdrum fade away. The whole texture of your experience changes and you say to yourself, "OK," now I've made it; now I will be happy." You are left with just a memory…
>
> So what is wrong with you? Are you a freak? No. You are just human. And you suffer from the same malady that infects every human being. It is a monster inside all of us, and it has many arms: Chronic tension, lack of genuine compassion of others, including people closest to you, feelings being blocked up, and emotional deadness…None of us is entirely free from it. We may deny it. We try to suppress it. We build a whole culture around hiding from it, pretending it is not there, and distracting ourselves from it with goals and projects and status. But it never goes away. It is a constant undercurrent in every thought and every perception; a little wordless voice at the back of the head that keeps saying, "Not good enough yet. Got to have more. Got to make it better. Got to be better." It is a monster, a monster that manifests everywhere in subtle forms.
>
> Go to a party. Listen to the laughter, that brittle-tongued voice that says fun on the surface and fear underneath. Feel the tension, feel the pressure. Nobody really relaxes. They are faking it. Go to a ball game. Watch the fan in the stand. Watch the irrational fit of anger. Watch the uncontrolled frustration bubbling forth from people that masquerade under the guise of enthusiasm, or team spirit. Booing, cat-calls and unbridled egotism in the name of team loyalty. Drunkenness, fights in the stands. These are the people trying desperately to release tension from within. These are not people who are at peace with themselves. Watch the news on TV. Listen to the lyrics in popular songs. You find the same theme repeated over and over in variations.[10]

If future generations were to gain a deeper understanding of our dependency on others, they may be able to avoid inhumanity such as war, genocide, hate, violence, and dishonesty. An education that is wide in scope will lead to a higher likeliness of interacting with fellow human beings. To say the least, a harmonious society will make it easier to solve our sociological problems both on the national and international level. It is imperative, therefore, that higher education be the change that it wishes to see happen and avoid that which pains it to witness.

Regardless of how beneficial the Humanities are humankind, there are unfortunately very little fruit born from the ideals of general education models used today. The value of the Humanities is underappreciated and touted as impractical. According to Masao Miyoshi, this is due to political divides between departments and the stubborn unwillingness to teach with an interdisciplinary attitude:

> I will not go into the history behind the increasing isolation of the humanities from "the rest of the world" and its near complete neglect by those outside the profession. Briefly put, the oppositionism of the 1960s and the 1970s, engaged in anticolonialism, anti-imperialism, antiracism, and antipatriarchy, was a powerful

[10] Mahathera. Henepola Gunaratara. Mindfulness In Plain English. Summerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2002.

> libratory movement. Its ascendancy in the academy was a moment of victory celebrated in the name of justice and equality. It sought to challenge the unquestioned acceptance of enlightened reason and universalism. However, in the past thirty years, multiculturalism has become naturalized and assimilated, gradually hardening to a new academic orthodoxy. The logic of difference now dominates. Since difference insists on the incommensurability of each group, any definable particular insists on its autonomy, like the neoliberal practice. It promotes exclusive self-interest. Combined with the tradition conservatism of the academy, the Humanities is now a plurality of incommensurable autonomies. The fragmentation of the humanities among ethnic studies, gender studies, postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and conventional disciplines, all based on the principle of difference and particularism, is so intensified that its members are no longer sharing or even speaking with each other. All the while, technology continues to attract the attention of the public and the media, and the humanities appear like contentions groups of eccentrics, each speaking in exclusive and inaccessible codes, which sound like gibberish to the outsiders.[11]

Former President of Harvard University Derek Bok illuminates the fact that "undergraduates now place much greater importance on making money than they did 40 years ago. Students attending college for this reason are less likely to share a love of learning for its own sake and are more inclined to value education chiefly for its immediate utility and/or in order to achieve the material success they regard so highly." Faculty, staff, administration and professors in higher education, therefore, should not perpetuate separatist attitudes when teaching students. "Most professors try to concern themselves with provable knowledge-statements that can be verified by empirical demonstration, mathematics, or logic," Bok goes on to say. "In many disciplines, values are regarded with suspicion as mere matters of opinion; their validity cannot be established by the methods of scientists and scholars, and faculty members do not feel that they have special qualifications for teaching them. Professors of this persuasion avoid using material on the ethical implications of their discipline or other questions of value"[12] and are thus doing a disfavor for their students. The undeniable reality that time is of essence demands for new ways of dealing with changing value systems. If professors continue to rely on outdated

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[11] Miyoshi, Masao. "Technology and the Humanities in the 'Global' Economy." Defining Values For Research and Technology, The University's Changing Role. Ed. William T. Greenough, Philip J. McConnaughay, and Jay P. Kesan. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefiend Publishers, Inc., 2007. 216-17.

[12] Bok, Derek. Our Underachieving Colleges. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006. 37

rubrics of education that refuse interdisciplinary teaching, they fail to help their students grapple, cope, and develop ways of dealing with the ethical tests that they will face once they matriculate.

The fragmentation of the Humanities from other departments has resulted from the specialization of disciplines. The Humanities are taught as unrelated to the broader society despite the fact that they are interrelated (like all things). This is dangerous. Professors who dismiss multi-disciplinary approaches to teaching courses will not be effective in making students appreciate the value of the Humanities *as well as* technical education. One should not presume that an appreciation of the Humanities is something that students are born with, especially when there are many other things that divert their attention away from the value of a Humanities education.

In order to deal with "students [who] think too highly of subjects that seem to have immediate utility [and] ephemeral value for their careers" (Bok, 36), professors must be willing to confront their students regarding the relationship between ethics and their role in the world as future workers. This will take a multidisciplinary approach to teaching, which can be achieved by following these steps:

1) ***Change the way the Humanities are taught.***
    a. Disciplinary teaching must become multidisciplinary. The latter approach is more beneficial to college students than the former. Fine literature, for example, can teach students how to appreciate the human condition.
    b. Each sub-discipline in the Humanities should be taught and used to construct a total understanding of human beings, their conditions, and their societies.

2) ***Humanities professors should consider themselves as generalists who can also be called on to teach a subfield in the technical sector.***

a. In the classroom, professors should strive to show how the fabric of the Humanities is woven into the broader society. A professor teaching constitutional law, for instance, should weave European history, East Asian history, and American history into the origin and evolution of the ideas behind powerful laws and amendments. If he or she is under the impression that history should and can only be taught by a history professor, he or she is fragmenting the humanity aspect of the discipline.

3) There must be a systemic change in how academic departments are organized.

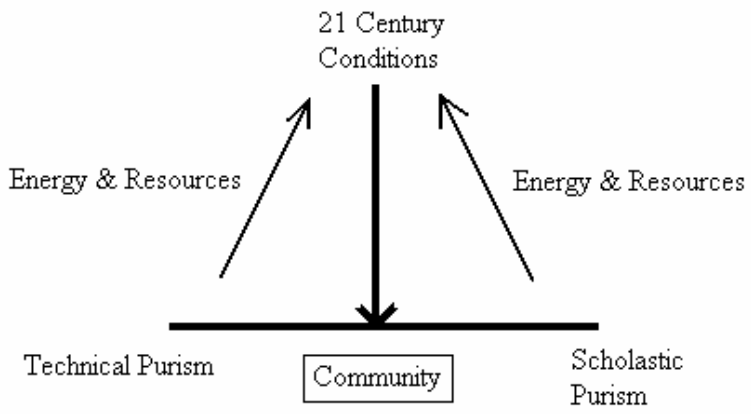
a. Since departments have their own budgets, general attitudes towards budgeting air around how best to protect their funds and self-interests. Self-interests that are centered on disciplinary teaching will lead to political divides between departments.
b. If the political walls between departments are extinguished, professors might feel more inclined to bring their expertise into other departments. By showing students how the strings of humanity are weaved into the quilt of existence, they may kindle student interest in the Humanities. Students may then see just how interwoven the Humanities are in society and how deeply dependent they are on each other.

Yet our work does not end here. Present day leaders must empower future generations with skills that will help them comprehend the complexities of the society they will inherit. Professors-whether they be humanist or technical-are responsible for making the Humanities more attractive to their students.

I acknowledge the reality that instructors as well as administrators face setbacks when they attempt to devote effort towards marketing and/or teaching the Humanities. For example, how can professors build appreciation for the Humanities through the turmoil of politics and self interests? The problem, I believe, is not so much a personal issue but an environmental issue.

Many colleges lack ecumenical learning environments where departments extend themselves beyond their specializations, or what Dr. King outlined as the "beloved community." It is the beloved community that epitomizes the ideal environment for learning and growth. In an essay entitled *Martin Luther King's Vision of the Beloved Community*, Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr. remark that "King's was a vision of a completely integrated…community of love and justice…a vision of total relatedness." King himself made the claim that "the ultimate aim …our ultimate goal is genuine intergroup and interpersonal living." Administrators and instructors should seek to foster communities *within* the classroom that mimic King's vision of the beloved community. Furthermore, they should work towards the same goal within the departmental infrastructure.

In my view, 21st century conditions have nourished the divide between the Humanities and the technical departments. Scholastic purism and technical purism are the manifestations of the tension that exists within the university and is the result of deeply ingrained feelings of insecurity and fear. We can think of this dilemma as a pathway conflict, wherein goals are similar but different avenues are pursued to reach them. As is often with this type of conflict, different approaches are translated as indifference, fostering anger and the desire to further detach groups from each other, therefore delineating "them" from "us." When the understanding of the interconnectedness of higher education departments is lost to the dross of singularity and individual pursuit, colleges as well as their students suffer directly as well as indirectly. Muchio Kushi puts it this way: "our modern approach is dualistic, and has separated each of us into fragments that seek to be united into a unified, comprehensive whole…everyone is afraid, and



therefore everyone is suspicious and has enemies."[13] Presented in the diagram to the left, is an approach for eradicating the political divides in academia in order to reinstate community. Energy and resources must be devoted towards inquiry and analysis of the conditions that the 21st century has brought into contemporary society on the local as well as international level. The question we must be asking is: how have these conditions affected how we react and interact with our peers, co-workers and administrations? Resources devoted towards comprehending where we are and where we are headed, while at the same time maintaining funding for specific areas of study, will transcend vested interests and eventually cultivate community within the academy, which in the long run, should make a strong case for what I would like to call *interlearning*, or learning across disciplines.

Once strong communities have culminated into a benevolent force, a practicum of civic engagement should be adopted by higher education to train students as citizens. Civic

[13] Kushi, Michio. The Teachings of Michio Kushi: Volume One. Boston, MA: The East West Foundation, 1972. 7-8.

opportunities-aside from internship opportunities-will allow students to put their humanitarian skills to use. Community-based service programs integrated into curricula will benefit students as well as communities in the surrounding areas. For example, students and their professors can do a great amount of good by taking fine literature into local communities in partnership with public school systems. Discussions regarding the socioeconomic as well as philosophical implications of literature will expose younger generations to new ways of thinking about their world. People will grow closer and the need for scholastic and technical purism will evaporate in the bright sunlight of service.

In 1990, Sant Rajinder Singh, a teacher of the science of spirituality commented that in education, "there should be intellectual development, physical development, and there should also be development on the spiritual side."[14] Western education has already proved that intellectual and physical development is extremely important. Singh is right in saying that we have overlooked the value of spiritual development. Cultivating spiritual development can bring purpose to life. And once individuals find purpose for their lives they grow naturally compassionate, and in doing so, find meaning by following spiritual values and rituals. However, as far as education is concerned, my view is that meaning can also be gained through the practice of good-hearted action. Infusing spirituality into curricula may pose a problem due to the diverse spiritual practices that already exist. Moreover, individuals often practice spirituality on a personal level. Developing a spiritual practice that is all-encompassing may not only be extremely difficult, but foster discord as well. In order to avoid this problem, new methods that give meaning to our work and our actions must be created. Civic engagement serves this purpose.

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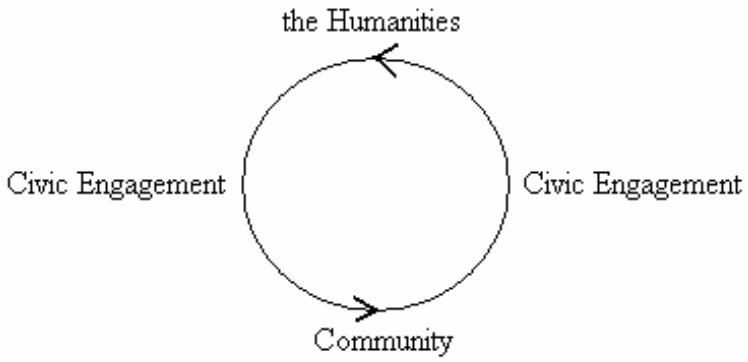
[14] Singh, Sant Rajinder. Education for a Peaceful World. Virginia: Science of Spirituality, 1992. 9.

If the beloved community can be established within the academy and the Humanities become an integrated part of education, using practice to further understand it will create value for those who serve and those who receive service. I've diagramed the cyclical relationship between humanities education, compassion-based service, and community below. Each has positive effects on the other. Learned citizens that extend their skills into their local communities through civic engagement will educate their communities, which may likely return their good favors with reciprocity. These communities will also be the recipients of genuine compassion, which in this day and age, is quite a rarity. Those who extend themselves beyond the confines of the classroom will develop a sense of meaning in their lives, promoting feelings of fulfillment that are thought to arise only from spirituality. It is clear, therefore, that the Humanities and civic engagement will benefit everyone.



American higher education has come a long way since its humble beginnings. Yet the sheer complexity of our contemporary society makes an unassailable case for humanist-based education and service. Politics and superficiality must not dominate our minds and cloud our judgment. Fostering virtue and humanity has never been as important as it is now. If selfishness continues to exist, the world will further complicate itself and we may never be able to see the radiant day of peace and tranquility that we wish so vehemently to see. Although the Humanities still hold a place in the academy, conflicts trump their value and students are not given opportune exposure to them. If this is where we are today, measures need to be taken to ensure that future generations are bequeathed lives of meaning and compassion. This is our goal and our task. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, as the highest educational institute in the land, the university "must be the change [it] wishes to see."