

## **Questions About Universities and Their Development**

Where does the impulse come from to create universities as centers of learning, education and research? In European tradition essentially the universities were founded to transmit the culture and established learning from one generation to another. Although this function is still apparent in contemporary universities, the very concept of function and value of universities and education represents today a myriad of such programs and purposes.

One can see education as tied to human development at large -- e. g. Rousseau's "Emile." The school as a socio-politico-economic instrument to train and indoctrinate newer generations and the moral purposes concerned with guiding human impulses in civilized ways. Society to direct and channel our potentially destructive and aggressive forces in ourselves. In totalitarian regimes organization of youth and their regimentation is seen as essential to the survival of the state. (cf. Plato and the "Republic.")

With the emergence of modern democracy the essential role of education in the schools is not merely a process of political aspects of democracy but as Dewey saw it true democracy is cultural and social as a permuting way of life and should be at once recognized, fostered and developed in the schools of all kind.

Contrary pressures and positions that come from academics and from persons in the political sector, the former, academics, see universities as proper environments for research and exploration of knowledge. The latter see universities as engaged in teaching young persons skills and fulfilling themselves in the society -- essentially seeing the university in terms of its social service. The basic attention and pressures as countervailing forces are at work in the universities. In America the solution appears in the form of the land grant concept. Seen as essential to the democracy, to the economy, and to education, yet also of necessity realizing the need for appropriate scholarship and research.

Let us examine some point of view associated with some of these tensions. For example, Bloom and the advocacy of the great books and the past Chicago undergraduate general education structure.

1. First, the failure to see curricula programs as temporary, ad hoc and essentially corrigible and experimental recommendations to advance the education of new and expanding student bodies.
2. Secondly, the tendency to treat texts *per se* as sacrosanct and permanent underpinnings for our intellectual grasp of the world.
3. Development of a new kind of orthodoxy and dangers of intellectual intolerance, their critical positions, countervailing approaches or

iconoclastic utterances. This seemed an academic threat to academic freedom in stead of its flowering.

4. Eventually the problem is one of distrust of our own democratic constituencies and values in creating a built-in sources for conflict and lack of appreciation of the context within which universities, private and public, must develop in a democracy.

That is why one cannot deal with issues of higher education in a vacuum. It must be tied to the value of a democratic society and likewise the value of democracy must be apparent in the positions and values of the intellectual activities in the university -- from curriculas to course offerings and dealing with the diversity and pluralistic character of our students.