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The Future of Our Educational Institutions

by

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Part 2 of 3

III. THE MAJOR PROPOSALS OF THE PAIDEIA PROGRAM

A. I am going to divide these proposals as follows:

1. First, a statement of the educational objectives of basic schooling, on the one hand, and of advanced schooling, on the other.
2. Second, a statement of the elements in the curriculum of basic schooling designed to achieve the educational objectives set for that level of institutionally assisted learning which, when completed, deserves the Bachelor of Arts degree.

B. *The objectives of basic and of advanced schooling*

1. In considering the objectives of both basic and advanced schooling, we must remember two things:
 - a. That all schooling is or should be preceded by parentally assisted pre-school learning.
 - b. That all schooling, when terminated at either the basic or advanced level, is or should be followed by unassisted adult learning, without which no one can become an educated person.
2. For those whose schooling terminates at the end of twelve years, the controlling objectives of the educational process should be an adequate preparation for the three vocations common to all. These common vocations can be described as follows:
 - a. All are called upon to discharge the political duties of citizenship, the highest office in a democratic republic, in which citizens are the principal and permanent rulers and all office-holders from the president down are only instrumental and transient rulers, responsible to the will and judgment of the citizenry.
 - b. All will have ample free time to engage in the pursuits of leisure, among which preeminently are all forms of unassisted adult learning.
 - c. All (or almost all) will be engaged in some special occupation, walk of life, or professional career, through which they will earn a living.
3. For those—some, not all—whose institutionally assisted learning does not terminate with basic schooling, basic schooling should also be adequate preparation for engagement in advanced schooling.
4. Advanced schooling should be adequate preparation for one or another of the specialized occupations, scholarly or professional careers that individuals may engage in after all schooling is completed. In addition, it should also be further preparation for the same three vocations common to all, which have been mentioned above, especially the first and second.

[That is the reason for the required common minor accompanying all the elective specialized majors.]

5. Specialized preparation for earning a living in occupations that do not involve highly technical skills and highly specialized knowledge may have to be provided in one of two ways for those whose schooling terminates at the basic level, in view of the fact that such basic schooling should be completely non-vocational.
 - a. One way is to put the responsibility on industry or business for providing on-the-job training.
 - b. The other way is to set up purely vocational institutes which are no part of either basic or advanced schooling, but which are needed to supplement basic schooling because it excludes all specialized vocational training from the first twelve years.
6. In terms of what has just been said, the objectives of basic schooling should be undifferentiated—identical for all. The objectives of advanced schooling should be differentiated in so far as such schooling is conceived as preparatory for different specialized careers, walks of life, or occupations whereby one earns a living.
 - a. Advanced schooling should have only one undifferentiated objective.
 - b. That is the objective which it has in common with the objectives of basic schooling, namely preparation for the vocations common to all—the duties of citizenship and the moral obligation to use free time for the creative pursuits of leisure, preeminent among which is continued adult learning.
 - c. It is in this respect that specialized advanced schooling should also be accompanied by a leaven of general, liberal, and humanistic learning.

[Proposal in re one major and one minor]

7. Both basic and advanced schooling must be conceived as preparatory in two distinct directions.
 - a. Basic schooling prepares all for engagement in the vocations common to all and it also prepares some individuals for further education at the level of advanced schooling, or alternatively for further training in on-the-job training or training in specialized vocational institutes.
 - b. Advanced schooling prepares for engagement in different technical occupations or learned professions, and it also provides additional preparation for the vocations that are common human callings and responsibilities. In accomplishing the latter objective, advanced schooling also provides general, liberal, and humanistic preparation for engagement in specialized occupations or professions.

8. A few words further about the undifferentiated objectives of compulsory basic schooling and the differentiated objectives of optional, advanced schooling.
 - a. Basic schooling should aim to cultivate the mind for all the uses that arise from our common obligations—its use for the duties of citizenship, its use for continued learning after schooling is completed, its use for other creative pursuits of leisure which are the essential ingredients of a good human life, and its use for earning a living.
 - b. Advanced schooling should aim to train the mind for a variety of specialized uses—in research, in scholarship, in one of the learned professions, in some technical occupation; and, in addition, it should aim at carrying further what was begun at the level of basic schooling, namely, the cultivation of the mind for those uses of it that are common to all.

C. Though I do so with some hesitation, I should add here one point in the Paideia Program that was never finally agreed upon by our conferees and one that has serious objections to it as well as obvious merits.

1. It is the proposal that at least two years of compulsory non-schooling should intervene between the completion of basic schooling and engagement in advanced schooling.
2. This would require our society to provide employment either in the public or private sector for those who may wish to go on to advanced schooling but who are compelled to postpone it by this enforced hiatus between basic and advanced schooling.
3. The merit of this proposal is that it would enable those who go on to advanced schooling to become a little more mature, which few or none can become while remaining in school.
 - a. This period of maturation out of school may enable the individual to make a better decision about whether to go on to advanced schooling.
 - b. It would, in any case, enable him or her to undertake such advanced schooling in a more serious and mature way.

D. *The curriculum of basic schooling conceived as aiming at the already stated undifferentiated objectives for all.*

1. The proposed curriculum or course of study is divided into three main columns or by reference to three main categories. These run concurrently, with many interconnections, through the course of the twelve years of basic schooling.
 - a. The first of these categories, defining one whole column of learning in the tripartite scheme, can be described as consisting of the subject-

matters concerning which information or knowledge should be acquired.

They are (1) the subject-matters of the natural sciences, physical and biological, including at least two years of physics; (2) the subject-matter of the mathematical disciplines up to and including calculus; and (3) the subject-matter of social, political, economic, and cultural history (which is to be understood as replacing everything now supposed to be covered in the so-called “social studies”).

- b. The second of these categories, defining another column of learning in the tripartite scheme, can be described as all the skills of learning that are involved, on the one hand, in the use of ordinary language; and, on the other hand, in the use of the symbols of mathematics and of scientific instruments.
- (1) These are the fundamental intellectual skills—the skills of literacy and of numeracy, the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, the skills of observing, measuring, and calculating, and the skills of analysis, reasoning, and argument.
 - (2) None of these skills can be acquired in a vacuum.
 - (a) Some must be acquired in the course of acquiring knowledge of the subject-matters assigned to the first column in the curriculum—knowledge of mathematics, science, and history.
 - (b) Some must be acquired in the course of dealing with the various elements assigned to the third column in the curriculum, elements I shall mention presently.
 - (c) And some must be acquired in the course of becoming competent in the use of language itself as a means of communication and as an instrument of learning.
 - (3) The skills just mentioned pieces language-learning in this second column. By language-learning, we understand achieving competence not only in English, but in at least one other, or possibly two other, foreign languages.
 - (a) If only one foreign language, that should be an elective choice among such languages as German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, and Chinese.
 - (b) If two foreign languages, the second foreign language should be an elective choice between Greek or Latin.
- c. The third category, defining the remaining column in the curriculum, is the single most important innovation proposed by the Paideia Program. It consists of individual works of human art—human

productions in literature, in music, and in the visual arts, including here films and TV productions.

(1) Under the heading of literature, it consists, on the one hand, of imaginative works which have the same character as other works of fine art in music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and film; and, on the other hand, it consists of expository works in all fields of subject-matter—mathematics, natural science, history, and philosophy;

(a) In no instance, text-books in these fields, but always original or primary works.

(b) These works are to be used as materials for seminars in which the aim is the discussion of fundamental ideas in all fields of subject-matter.

(2) Imaginative works of poetry and fiction can, of course, be used for seminars in which ideas are discussed; but, like pieces of music and visual works, they are also to be experienced as objects to be appreciated aesthetically, to be enjoyed and to be admired for their excellence.

(3) The reading of books throughout the twelve years of basic schooling—books that are not textbooks—should aim not only at an acquaintance with fundamental ideas in all fields of subject-matter, but also at developing all the skills in the use of language that have been enumerated under the second category or in the second column of this tripartite curriculum.

(4) In addition, expository books are to be used for developing understanding of the subject-matters listed in the first column under the first category. If textbooks or manuals are used for imparting knowledge of the three subject-matters (science, mathematics, and history), they should always be accompanied by the reading of original works in these three fields—to increase understanding.

2. It will be seen that this tripartite curriculum is an integrated whole in which all the parts fit together, reinforce one another, and are related to one another as the instruction proceeds from the simple to the more complex during the twelve years of basic schooling.

a. I wish there were time for me to state in detail the determinations made by the Paideia Project with regard to this progress from simpler to more complex grades of instruction in all three columns of the curriculum.

b. We have considered what can and should be done in the first six years, and what must be postponed or relegated to the second six years—in

view of the age of the students at these different periods and the natural development of their mental powers in the course of aging.

- c. If questions are asked about these details, I may be able to answer some of them, though perhaps not all, because the work of the Paideia Project is not yet completed in these respects.

3. I would like to add one further comment on the third column of the tripartite curriculum.

- a. Literature, poetic and fictional, as well as expository works in science, mathematics, history, and philosophy, should be used for a twofold purpose.

- (1) On the one hand, to learn how to read, write, speak, and listen; to learn how to engage in discussion; to become literate and skilled in the use of language.

- (2) On the other hand, they should be used to become conversant with fundamental ideas, especially the basic ideas involved in our form of government and relevant to our kind of society.

- (3) It is here that the Paideia Project regards the reading of the following documents as mandatory: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Federalist Papers, the Gettysburg Address—a kind of reading that would involve the most careful explication of every critical word or sentence in the documents mentioned.

- b. As in the case of books, acquaintance with other works of human art should aim at learning *how to* listen to music and how to talk about what one has heard; *how to* look at paintings, statues, buildings, films, and how to talk about what one has seen; and, in general, *how to* experience, enjoy, and appreciate such works of art.

4. Finally, there is a fourth element in the curriculum that does not run parallel to the three columns or categories, but completes basic schooling in another direction. Here there are three ancillary elements, as follows:

- a. Training in manual arts, such as carpentry, cooking, and sewing.
- b. Physical training and the development of physical fitness.
- c. General preparation for the world of work by acquaintance with the scope and variety of occupations or professions that may be engaged in to earn a living.

D. *The training of teachers for the various types of instruction envisaged in the tripartite curriculum of basic schooling.*

- 1. The feasibility of the curriculum proposed depends upon many conditions or factors that are external to its intention—the undifferentiated

objectives at which it aims. I have in mind such things as costs, the mood of the people, especially the parents, the intervention of noneducational considerations; the state of American culture or the lack of it; and so on.

2. But one factor is intrinsic, not external. The feasibility of the curriculum proposed depends directly and internally upon the existence of teachers able to make it come alive for the whole population of our schools.
 - a. The Paideia Project reached the conclusion that the teaching personnel of our schools at present would for the most part not be competent to perform the tasks assigned.
 - b. The Paideia Project also reached the conclusion that a competent teaching personnel would have to be trained in a manner radically different from the way in which teachers are now trained in our normal schools, teachers colleges, or schools of education, in order for them to become competent in the performance of the tasks assigned.
 - c. I hope you agree with both conclusions. On the assumption that you do, I would now like to spend a moment on what such training should be and where it should be given.



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