

Years of Why

THE COLLEGE AND THE COMMUNITY. By Baker Brownell. New York: Harper & Bros. 248 pp. \$3.50.

By HARRY W. SCHACTER

MR. BROWNELL'S book is one of the most stimulating and provocative books of our time—a book that desperately needed doing. It must have taken tremendous courage to write it considering how long the status quo has been entrenched in our institutions of higher learning. That it was written by a man who, himself, occupies an important position in an important university makes it doubly courageous.

Dr. Brownell levels a threefold charge at our colleges:

First, that they are fragmenting the life of their students at a time when the human personality so urgently needs to be treated as a whole. When a student goes to college, his background is usually a total community life—a healthy wholeness. When he has finished his education, he has been so segmentized that he has lost the concept of life as a basic unity.

Second, the average college education is totally unrealistic as a preparation for life. It puts a severe handicap on the student who, at the end of his college career, has to begin all over again learning how to cope with the realities of living. It is somewhat like the story of the student who played a piano piece, totally devoid of expression. When his teacher chided him for it, he said that he wanted to learn all the notes first, and that he would put the expression in later. With the keenest penetration, Dr. Brownell says: "College in peacetime has become a kind of sanctuary from the responsibilities of life, where young people can extend their hour of play up into the middle twenties. Here they are relieved of economic responsibility for the most part, and of social and intellectual responsibility as well."

But the third, and most devastating, indictment of our colleges is implied in the title of the book and concerns itself with what the college does to the small community. Dr. Brownell speaks here with eloquence and passion. "Higher Education in America" he says, "is more a matter of 'cut out and get out' than is generally supposed. What the lumber baron does to the forests, the college system in its way is

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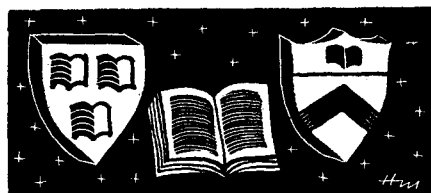
doing to the rural areas and America's little places. Higher education has become increasingly an extractive industry—like mining or oil. It "processes" young people and gives them degrees. It also removes them from their native places and markets them elsewhere. It is an extractive industry without safeguards. The rural families pay substantial sums for the college education of their children. The community that breeds and finances them rarely receives the benefit of this costly training.

"Meanwhile, the rural regions decline. They are relatively less advanced today than they were a century ago. In richness of life, in cultural integrity and self-reliance, they now are probably lower than at any time in our history.

"And yet, man is a community animal. When his community is dissolved, human life breaks down biologically, morally, even intellectually, and human education becomes futile. College education is one of the erosive forces that cause our small communities to wash away under our feet. All talk of a world community is meaningless if the regional and local community is dissolved."

What effect has this on our democracy? It is becoming increasingly clear that the battle for democracy will be won or lost in the local community. Our democracy, which draws its basic strength from our 10,000 or more small American communities, will be substantially weakened if our small towns are weakened. In direct proportion that the American colleges contribute to that weakening, they endanger our democracy and our freedom which cannot survive without the little places of our land.

Can the status quo of the segmentized unrealistic curriculum be changed? Can the big university be decentralized? Dr. Brownell answers both questions in the affirmative. He describes vividly some of his own



daring but highly successful experiments at Northwestern University, and offers some new and challenging ideas, such as the "mobile" college. It makes fascinating reading.

This book will stir up a storm of controversy in this country wherever there is higher education. That storm will be most refreshing and will help clear air which has grown stale.

Act & Thought

CREATIVE EDUCATION IN THE HUMANITIES. By Arnold Didier Graeffe. New York: Harper & Bros. 199 pp. \$3.

By WILLARD B. SPALDING

QUESTIONS about the nature of general education have perplexed students of higher education for at least a generation. Many proposals have emanated from scholarly minds, some of which have been used widely. All, or nearly all, have been based upon the assumption that a body of knowledge exists which all men should possess. The theory underlying such of these proposals as arise from systematic thinking is, in almost every instance, one which provides a basis for the selection of appropriate content. Almost no one questions whether or not such a body of knowledge does or can exist.

Professor Graeffe is one of few authors who come close to examining the essential problem, although he does not quite come to grips with it. He proposes that, instead of basing a program upon "the mere conviction that general education is necessary" it should be based upon a "well-defined unifying principle." For him, this unifying principle is that which enables man to see the arts and the art of wisdom as a unity; in other words philosophy. The author states, "The role of philosophy as integrator in the humanities, if interpreted correctly, is not a matter of specific hypotheses and systems, but consists in philosophy's continuous insistence on a type of questioning that is in itself oriented toward synthesis and perspective. Integration in the humanities should be centered around this process." In this statement he appears to recognize that what is general is behavior, not knowledge. Men should as a result of education be able to synthesize, criticize, translate, evaluate, and carry on many other good acts. Yet he does not quite say this, either here or elsewhere in his book.

In defining the Humanities Area, Mr. Graeffe again approaches the idea that its boundaries are the acts of men. He includes those works which are "regarded as important today by those to whom the arts are important in their lives." He seeks to include the experiences of this "public" within these boundaries. He believes that the method by which this public places a work of art within a context "will lend

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itself naturally to an organic sequence for purposes of instruction." He advocates selecting material to which the instructor has a personal relation as content for instruction, wisely pointing out that "completeness in the Humanities can be properly obtained only by means of very catholic tastes indeed, or by a division of labor." If the latter choice is made, work should be allotted "mainly on the basis of the personal access that each instructor feels he has to the different parts that make up the whole," and the whole should be determined "by what can thus be put together." Further limitations are set by the exclusion of things which "will in all probability remain permanently closed to our students;" and by the way in which "the principle of recourse to experience imposes additional limitations upon our choice of material." "Experiencing," "placing art within a context," "selecting material," "personal access," and "exclusion" are acts and not knowledge. The author's system will be criticized, and to some extent justifiably so, but it is probable that by turning his attention to the acts of men rather than to the mossy and sometimes moldy content of traditional fields of knowledge, Mr. Graeffe has served general education well. What happens in a field of education is often as much a function of the way in which professors teach as of the content which is taught. As the author points out, "New projects often contain discrepancy between the idea in which they are based and the details of execution." In order to avoid this discrepancy, it is claimed that two methods of organizing instruction in the Humanities lead to inadequate teaching.

The additive method, that of offering many short courses which the student is required to take, does not allow teaching for synthesis. If synthesis has occurred under this system in the past, this has been because of the highly selected character of the student body. Higher education is now well on the way to becoming universal education. It is highly probable that as important an act as synthesizing

cannot be left to chance. Students must be taught to do it.

The illustrative method, that of using the arts to illustrate a literary core, makes it difficult to teach their meaning. The significance of the arts is missed because they are used as a source from which ideas are selected on the basis of subject matter.

The method of organization which Mr. Graeffe proposes is that of using philosophy as an integrator. His emphasis upon the importance of the act of philosophizing, or, as he states it, "philosophy as process" is excellent. But, when he states his concept of philosophy more fully, it is apparent that his ultimate criterion, and real unifying agent is the arts and not philosophy. Although he places desirable emphasis upon those directions of philosophy which are "Synthesis oriented"—the nature of man, the nature of civilization, and the nature of the universe—he soon abandons them. He states that "thought should be selected wherever it provides a rational parallel to the artist's creative vision of man as a whole and the world as his habitation." This clearly means that the ultimate criterion for determining what thought, and therefore what philosophy, will be used as an integrating factor is the artist's creative vision.

In his discussion of the stages of integration, the author actually uses the arts as the integrating factor, paying little attention to his prior advocacy of philosophy for this role. In fact, when he states that "the decisive question is not whether a certain interpretation is correct but whether it is possible," he has separated himself permanently from philosophy and gone over whole-heartedly to the arts. This is a defensible position, even when taken inadvertently.

As a result, his techniques of integration are based upon experience in the arts, which he describes in five stages. The methodology which he bases on these is stimulating and suggestive. Every teacher, whether or not his field is among the humanities should be familiar with it. His discussion of the workshop technique and of the testing program are interestingly in contradiction. In the one he places great emphasis on the acts which students do. In the other his emphasis is largely upon the ability of students to use words, although, even here, there is some attention to doing projects instead of writing essays or taking verbal tests.

The final section of the book presents specific plans for teaching the Humanities. These are helpful if they stimulate thought. They can become harmful if they are copied and so become stereotypes.



Please Help Me

SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES. By Ernest V. Hollis and Alice L. Taylor. New York: Columbia University Press. 422 pp. \$5.50.

By EDUARD C. LINDEMAN

SOcial work, according to Mr. Hollis and Miss Taylor, is professionally adolescent. Its practitioners are uneasy. They are not quite sure that they know what they are supposed to do, and they are quite certain that the public misunderstands them. But, like all worried adolescents, they keep on growing in spite of their confusions. There are now some 75,000 of them, but only 30 per cent of this number are adequately trained. They are not well-paid but on the whole not worse off in this respect than teachers, librarians, and nurses. The nation's total bill for welfare services is enormous, perhaps as much as twelve billion dollars. There are some fifty-two professional schools in which prospective social workers are trained, and it costs almost \$1,500 per year to educate one. Most social workers are females, and when not they receive better pay.

The above facts and near-facts are utilized in this study as a structural framework from which to derive certain conclusions and proposals. Dr. Hollis and Miss Taylor, both employees of the Federal Security

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Widow

By Hannah Kahn

BECAUSE you taught me where to walk,
I followed in your ways . . .
And by the compass of your mind
I measured off my days.

You should have taught me also,
Who now am numb as stone,
How to walk without you,
How to walk alone.

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