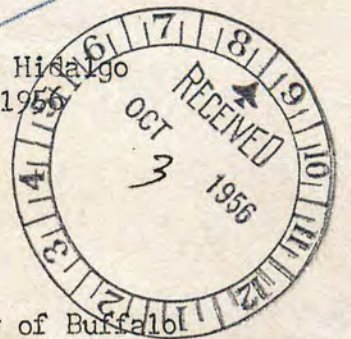


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ANALISIS DE EDUCACIÓN GENERAL  
GENERAL EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS \*



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THE MEANING OF GENERAL EDUCATION

The adjective "general" has all but displaced the older "liberal" in educational discussion. Nevertheless, many members of liberal-arts faculties still object to the coinage of "general education." If the term means anything at all, they insist, it is embodied in the concept of liberal education, and the new expression is, therefore, entirely unnecessary.

No one desires to defend the invention of a new phrase if an old one will do. But the enormous amount of writing, discussion, and invention that has occurred under the designation of "general education" during the past thirty years seems to indicate that there is more to this movement--for movement it is--than a name. It is a movement which began as a re-examination of the nature and purposes of liberal education and which is leading toward a revitalization of the liberal arts, and perhaps to a complete reconsideration of the nature of the learning process. It is doubtful that this reconstruction has proceeded so far that the term "general education" has outlived its usefulness.

Background Factors

The early proponents of this movement believed that correctives were badly needed for certain tendencies in college and university education. General education was a reaction against overspecialization, against imbalance between the pursuit of special interests and the attainment of the broader cultivation that the liberally educated man was traditionally expected to possess. It was a reaction, too, against the fragmentation of the curriculum and the disunity in the student's educational experience that were the inevitable concomitants of the vast increase in specialized knowledge. So chaotic had the educational program become, even in the liberal-arts college, that it was almost impossible to see life steadily and to see it whole (if that be an attainable ideal under any circumstances); and with an eye always of the progressive subdivision of departments, subjects, courses, and specialized sequences, it became more and more difficult for scholars and educational officers to keep the student in mind at all, much less to see him steadily or see him whole.

With the increasing emphasis on specialization, technical matters, even in the old disciplines, began to crowd out humane considerations. Each department began to treat all students, even in elementary or introductory courses, as potential specialists, in spite of the fact that only a few of them would pursue the subject to that point. As a result, basic liberal studies became more and more technical and less and less relevant to fundamental human concerns. It was the science faculties that were most frequently charged--by the humanists--with being illiberal, but the latter in many instances themselves quite unconsciously succumbed to the evils they denounced. Professor Bush of Harvard has made the following comment on the responsibility for the decline of interest in humanistic studies among undergraduates.

Custodians of the humanities have been far from blameless. The young sheep may or may not have been hungry, but they too often have been given the husks of literary history and professional scholarship.

The spiritual vacuum left by such teaching has been promptly filled with various kinds of gas, so that the aforesaid sheep, ". . . swoln with the wind, and the mist they draw, rot inwardly, and foul contagions spread."

\* Chapter I, The Fifty-First Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I, General Education, Distributed by the University of Chicago Press, Chicago 37, Illinois, C 1952. Mimeographed with the written permission from the Secretary of the Society.

Meanwhile teachers of the humanities have looked on with cynical but largely inactive contempt.(1)

Thus, more than anything else, perhaps, general education was and is a reaction against formalism in liberal education. That education may lose contact with the human spirit, that it may degenerate into something perfunctory, narrow, or stilted is the warning Sir Richard Livingstone has given in the following passage:

"Salt can lose its savour; the humanities can lose their humanity. Education continually tends to degenerate into technique, and the life tends to go out of all subjects when they become technical. . . . It is possible to read history and get a history scholarship and an honors degree in it without divining the deeps that lie beneath laws and wars, diplomacy and institutions, or hearing behind the tumult and the shouting the still sad music of humanity: indeed that music is inaudible in most history books, though always present in the great ones. So easily can education decline into routine and mechanism. . . . Knowledge may become an end in itself, irrespective of whether it is worth knowing. The scholar is seduced by his technique."(2)

Liberal studies--in the humanities and the sciences alike--easily fall prey to all sorts of pedantries unless teachers strive earnestly to make them relevant to human needs and values, to bring them to bear on students' own problems and the crucial issues of their age. There is need today for another educational renaissance. This is suggested, at least, by many experiences with students, of which the following episode is a typical example:

A student in a class which had just been admonished to study philosophy asked, "If philosophy is such an important liberal study, can you tell me why it is that our courses in philosophy never seem to have anything to do with things that matter to us?"

That is the kind of question that general education seeks to answer.

Whether all of them believe in the philosophy of John Dewey or not, most people will agree that Dewey has indicated the form that the answer should take. Speaking of the role that philosophy should play in the understanding and management of human affairs, he urged that this subject be transformed from "a device for dealing with problems of philosophy" into "a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men." This, it seem to me, epitomizes the spirit and purpose of general--and truly liberal--education, to make learning in the words of President Seymour of Yale, "functional and living in our time."

#### Definitions of General Education

Lest the concept of general education still be left in vague form, however, definition is here in order. Fortunately, there is increasing agreement, though by no means universal consensus as yet, on what general education is. Typical of recent definitions are the following:

Its function is to prepare young people . . . to deal not with the special problems parceled out in our society to the members of the various occupations and professions--to the chemist and the carpenter, the architect and the accountant, the merchant and the housewife--but with the problems which confront all members of our society alike, such problems as our domestic and foreign policies, our political leadership, our individual relations with the physical universe, our personal philosophies. General education appears from this point of view to be the preparation of youth to deal with the personal and social problems with which all men in a democratic society are confronted.(3)

General education . . . is that which prepares the young for the common life of their time and their kind. . . . It is the unifying element of a culture. It prepares the student for a full and satisfying life as a member

- (1) Douglas Bush, "Education but Not Educationalism," Key Reporter, VII (1942), 1-2.
- (2) R. W. Livingstone, Some Thoughts on University Education, pp. 16, 18. Fifth Annual Lecture of the National Book League, October 29, 1947. Cambridge, England: University Press, 1947.
- (3) Clarence H. Faust, "The Problem of General Education," in The Idea and Practice of General Education: An Account of the College of the University of Chicago, p. 6. By Present and Former Members of the Faculty. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950.

of a family, as a worker, as a citizen--an integrated and purposeful human being. It does not overlook differences in talent, interest, and purpose; nor does it attempt to form everyone in a single mental and spiritual mold. Seeking to make possible the maximum development of the individual consistent with the general good, it encourages respect for inventive genius and tolerance for variations in opinion, while at the same time it rests on the principle that deviations in thought or in act must be based on understanding rather than ignorance of the purposes, values, and standards of society. (4)

#### Differences in Interpretation

While statements of the meaning and broad function of general education tend to move in the direction of these two definitions, wide disagreement appears when the ends are stated in greater detail and the means are specifically decided upon. Some programs are based on the assumption that the broad purpose of general education can be most effectively attained by concentrating on intellectual processes. Others place emphasis on the concurrent development of all phases of the individual's personality--intellectual, social, physical, and emotional. Certain programs place principal reliance on study of the cultural inheritance, in the belief that the best way to meet present problems is to understand how comparable ones have been treated in the past. Others organize students' learning around present-day problems, not neglecting the past but using it as means of interpreting contemporary issues in accord, for example, with Hook's statement that ". . . general education must make one of its central functions the critical study of the basic cultural phenomena of our time."

Perhaps the majority of writers and institutions emphasize verbal sources of understanding almost exclusively: ". . . We cannot escape the fact that the most important decisions men have to make regarding society must be made, not on the basis of direct experience, but on the basis of verbal and written reports and arguments" (Faust). Some authors and programs, on the other hand, place greater confidence in the educative of actual participation by students in the life of their time, on and off the campus: "there is no substitute for the direct experience of the human being with the actual object of his thought. . . . Education, or knowledge-getting, is a process in which the student involves himself. Otherwise, it is simply a name for organized information" (Taylor).

To some exponents of general education, the purposes are to be attained by transmitting to each new generation of students the tested ideas and values of its cultural inheritance. To others, they are to be realized by making learning the "creative agent of cultural and social progress." To some, the process of general education is the inculcation of some accepted set of values and interpretations of individual and social experience. To the more venturesome, it is the process of encouraging students to discover for themselves the ideas and ideals which seem to hold the greatest promise for human beings and for society.

Assumptions concerning human nature, the process of human development and change, the way in which learning takes place, and the extent and method of transfer vary greatly, and decisions concerning curriculum organization and instructional procedures diversify correspondingly. Frequently the literature on general education and also the practice of general education disregard the available research on these matters; in relatively few instances are principles and procedures of general education based on studies of students and data concerning human behavior.

Now and then, the attempt in theories and programs of general education seems to be to induce a high degree of uniformity in knowledge, in values, and in social behavior. In other instances, the emphasis, while on the quality of social experience, is at the same time on the encouragement of individuality: "What we call independence of personality is one of the most reliable signs of distinctive inwardness. One of the tasks of general education should be to strengthen the sense of its significance which our culture seems to be losing" (Hook).

Whether general education should take responsibility for what human beings do or only for what they understand is another of the issues about which conceptions and practices diverge. President Conant states that he would amend the Harvard report on General Education in a Free Society ". . . by stressing the

(4) Earl J. McGrath, et al., Toward General Education, pp. 8-9. New York: Macmillan Co., 1948.

type of behavior on which a free society depends rather than emphasizing the common knowledge and common values which influence the behavior of citizens." In a later chapter of this yearbook (chap. vi), however, Naftalin takes the position that the social scientist in general education should not conceive of his objectives in terms of social action; he should limit his responsibility to how the student thinks in approaching the matters with which the social sciences are concerned. Williamson, on the other hand, takes the other position (chap. xi); he conceives of the extracurriculum as experiences which give the students the opportunity to work out in practice the principles learned in their courses. In this difference of view lies of the deepest issues in the philosophy of general education.

Although there are many differences in interpretation and practice, some of which have been summarized above, programs of general education almost invariably attempt in some fashion to restore relevance and coherence to the student's educational experience. Somehow, it is agreed, learning should be relevant to human needs, or more specifically, to students' needs (however they may be conveyed or discovered) and to the necessities of the time (whether they be considered to some degree novel or merely a continuation of the past). And general education nearly always represents an effort to substitute a new unity for the scattered fragments of knowledge into which the curriculum has disintegrated.

"The passion for unity seems to be inveterate, universal, and endemic," Kallen wrote recently.<sup>(5)</sup> He was discussing the problem of unity among the sciences, and he was warning against the construction of fixed systems. He questioned the use of the term "integration"--which occurs repeatedly in the literature on general education, ". . . with its implication of numerical wholeness, of seamless, static totality without fissure, without movement, without conflict" (p. 241). It seems appropriate, then, to ask: What degree of unity or what kind of relatedness should characterize general education? What is the significance of "integration" in general education?

There are various senses in which the term "integration" is used in discussing problems of higher education. Many of these meanings are explored in the final chapter of this yearbook, and, therefore, only a few of the connotations will be discussed here.

#### The Problem of Integration

Perhaps the most frequent way in which the term "integration" is used is in the sense of "integrated education." Thus, there has been an attempt to determine the degree to which particular disciplines, such as physics or economics can be brought together into a more inclusive and unified system through pervasive ideas, principles, or methodologies. Faust, in characterizing the divisional courses in the College of the University of Chicago, declared that ". . . it is possible to construct general courses which are not accumulations of selected conclusions from various departmental fields or vaguely general formulations of widely general problems but are exact, penetrating treatments of the basic principles of such an area as the social sciences or the humanities." But there is still the problem of organizing the several fields of knowledge if the curriculum is to be fully integrated. At Chicago, this task falls mainly to a course entitled "Observation, Interpretation, and Integration" designed "to equip the student with the knowledge and intellectual disciplines necessary for a theoretically and practically meaningful integration of the different fields of knowledge which are the main subject matter of the other general courses."

Although no such all-integrating course seems to be offered in the General College at Boston University, the catalog dated January 29, 1948, nonetheless stated that,

The primary distinction of the General College program derives from the "total integration" of its program of study, in contrast to these instances of "partial integration." ("Partial integration" is used to characterize divisional courses.) The aim, is to unify our courses of instruction so that they constitute, in effect, one single course in which the material drawn from all fields is synchronized and correlated at every feasible point to emphasize significant relationships and to promote meaningful generalizations, consistent knowledgeable attitudes, and critical appreciation.

(5) H. M. Kallen, "The Meanings of Unity among the Sciences," in Structure, Method, and Meaning, p. 225. Essays in honor of Henry M. Sheffer. Edited by Paul Henle, Horace M. Kallen, and Susanne K. Langer. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1951.

### Means and Kinds of Integration

Integration is often effected by some a priori principle or principles, creed or philosophy, theme or framework. Discussing the question of how a program of general education might be "tied together," Kerwing recently analyzed the problem as follows:

Here two schools came into conflict; the one feared the imposition of a point of view; the other feared a plan that would produce a sophisticated eclecticism with much knowledge and little wisdom. In a situation of this kind, church-affiliated institutions have the advantage of proceeding to tie things together on the basis of creed or philosophy. At the present time at the University of Chicago the tying-together function is handled through an orientation and integration course. I believe it can safely be said that most of the people that have been involved in one way or another in the general-education program feel that some basic course or other is necessary--at the beginning or the conclusion of the whole program. It may be the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Hume, or James, but some rule that other things are judged by--some springboard one leaps from--has to be provided. Nor does this involve with the skilful teacher a jamming of certain doctrines down the unwilling or unwitting student's throat. It assumes that both teacher and student are rational beings and that basic principles must be arrived at--painfully, perhaps, but necessarily--through step-by-step processes of reason and logic.(6)

This paragraph bristles with controversial educational issues, many of which will be discussed in later chapters of this volume. The following will serve here as examples: Is it justifiable to impose any particular set of "rules that other things are judged by," or should the student himself be encouraged to discover relations and formulate standards of judgment? Are ideas by which particulars may be ordered and understood to be taken to and educational experience or discovered in it? Granted that generalizations should be arrived at, at least tentatively, what is the nature of "basic principles"? Are they "first principles" or "eternal verities," or are they subject to revision with changes in individual and social experience? Are reason and logic the only processes by which order can be approached? Is an organization which is appropriate and fundamental to one purpose equally relevant to another? Is the end in view a neat structure of ideas and values which can be perpetuated, or is it the constant reorganization of experience in ever more meaningful ways?

### The Dangers of Standardization

It has often been said that the purposes of general education should be attained by giving students a common core of knowledge and ideals. This might be accomplished by having them take the same courses, or by having them read the same books. (Incidentally, using the "great books" as the basis of integration presents certain difficulties; some choice of ideas becomes essential, since these documents do not always speak in concert about human nature and experience or about fundamental principles.) The opponents of a common curriculum take the position that to the degree that the outcome is a standardized view of our cultural heritage, it seems to be incompatible with the fundamental processes by which solutions and agreements are reached in a democratic society. Also, a common curriculum seems to them to be inconsistent with what is known about individual variations in interests, motives, aptitudes, abilities, and the processes of development and learning. The late Dean J. B. Johnston of the University of Minnesota, who twenty years ago wrote one of the most perceptive and prophetic volumes on the individual student and his general and specialized education, considered and rejected the idea of a "single ideal curriculum." Among a hundred students, he insisted, there will be a hundred different personalities requiring particularized treatment. "Looked at in this way," he wrote, "it is as vain and futile for the college to require all its students to take the same courses of study as it was in the earlier day for medicine to attempt to apply one remedy to all conditions of disease. Common prescription of studies for all students is a remnant of the imposition of institutional tradition." (7) Dean Johnston believed that it is as necessary to individualize a student's general education as to tailor-make his specialized curriculum. "If we could give full regard to the different types and attitudes

- (6) J. G. Kerwin, "General Education: Getting the Program Started in a Large University," An address delivered at the Sixth Annual National Conference on Higher Education held in Chicago, April 2, 1951, Washington: Department of Higher Education, National Education Association, 1951 (mimeographed).
- (7) John B. Johnston, The Liberal College in Changing Society, p. 42. New York: Century Co., 1934.

among students," he said, "we would allow them to approach the world riddle from different directions."

### How Much Unity?

It is appropriate to ask, too, what degree or what kind of unity is requisite in a democracy and consistent with its spirit. A "common life" may turn out to be an undemocratic one. Men of good will, men with a strong sense of moral and spiritual values, men with unswerving democratic loyalties may be counted on to share the same purposes to a very great degree. But this is the kind of commonality that leaves room for wide differences in point of view, that attains unity not in spite of but through diversity, that assures freedom of discussion, criticism, dissent, and positive affirmation in deciding upon ends and in selecting or devising means. This may have been what President Conant had in mind when he said that in planning for general education in a democracy, we would be content with a few basic propositions concerning the way we want our present students to behave as adults. In a recent discussion of this problem I have suggested what some of these propositions might be:

Only in the broad and generalized sense . . . do we wish uniformity in point of view. What we do want is a people devoted to the conditions of freedom, men and women with a high sense of social obligation, citizens who bring to bear on the analysis and solution of their personal, social, economic, and political problems a fund of relevant and decisive information and disciplined methods of critical, constructive, and scientific thinking. The advancement of our way of life depends upon the orchestration of a wide range of talent and achievement and the application of the intelligence of free men to the solution of the problems which define the crisis of our age.(8)

This point of view may be quite unacceptable to many persons in the field of general education. The differences in position are related to basic philosophical, sociological, and psychological considerations, some of which are defined and discussed in chapters ii, iii, and iv.

### Integration and the Student

The foregoing discussion has been concerned predominantly with integration of subject matter, knowledge, or values. Because those who have been working at programs of general education are so preoccupied with problems of content, it has been almost habitual to think of general education as equivalent to a certain set of courses (particularly divisional courses), whether required or not. But a moment's consideration casts doubt on this conventional point of view; one realizes that the course one student takes for specialized purposes another may take as a part of his general education. After reflection, one may conclude that general education should be thought of in terms of outcomes rather than in terms of courses, and that perhaps the Harvard Committee was wise when it stated that general education is to be conceived more in terms of method and outlook than in terms of content. Yet Harvard does resort to courses devised especially for general education; in fact it has recently adopted a required program. Some theorists insist that, in planning general education, it is necessary, first, to determine purposes and, then, to select content or learning experiences in terms of them. The extreme neo-humanists, on the other hand, would seem to start with content and then plan on how to make it significant to students. In any event, the basic problems of general education have to do with the ends to be attained and economical means of achieving these objectives for individual students.

Whenever one ponders the problem of integration, he would do well to remember that beyond academic disciplines or organizations of content *there is the student* --his needs and the problems of living he will meet. That the student should integrate his formal and informal educational experiences in terms of his purposes is the contention of the instrumentalist as explained by Taylor in chapter ii. And it is the position taken by Corey in chapter iii, where he says that ". . . in the last analysis it is the way the learner organizes his own experience that counts rather than the organization imposed by other people upon the subject matter the student learns."

### Relation of General and Liberal Education

Sharp--and what sometimes seem to critics arbitrary--distinctions are often made between general and liberal education. It is said, for example, that liberal

(8) "Fundamental Decisions in Developing a Program of General Education," Educational Record, XXIX (April, 1948), 123-36.

education is concerned first with a body of subject matter, drawn mainly from the cultural heritage of the western world, while general education is concerned first with the learner as a human being. In another form this distinction is expressed as an emphasis on "content" versus a stress on the learner's adjustment to the conditions of life. The organization of the curriculum in liberal education would, consequently, be logical, following the systematic lines of fields of knowledge; the curriculum in general education, on the other hand, would presumably be organized around the needs, interests, or activities of individuals, or around the problems of modern life. This distinction is very much the same as that between two views of general education (see p. 3f.), and therefore does not serve very well to differentiate liberal from general education. As subsequent chapters will show, some programs of general education are based on the structure of fields of knowledge, while others are "student" centered or "life" centered. Many programs actually partake of both forms of organization.

Again, it is said that liberal education is concerned mainly with intellectual development, with submission of all other phases of personality to reason, while general education takes as its responsibility the development of the individual on a broader scale--emotional, social, and moral, as well as intellectual--and in an integrated way. But not a few defenders of liberal education will rise to say that the true liberal ideal is that of the well-rounded and balanced person, and that the intellect is not to be cultivated at the expense of creative abilities or of constructive emotional experience. Here, too, the distinction seem to divide on different programs of general education rather than to set off general from liberal education.

A third distinction sometimes made is that liberal education puts a premium on contemplation, in contrast with the emphasis of general education on action. But reference to earlier sections of this chapter will show that programs of general education divide on the same issue, although it is probably true that the literature in general education does put more stress than in liberal education on how a man acts or lives. Perhaps the real distinction is one of method. As pointed out previously, many exponents of liberal education seem to assume that thought inevitably carries over into appropriate action. This is a doubtful psychological assumption and one that the literature on general education has challenged.

Another presumed difference between general and liberal education is that the former has restored order to the curriculum, while the latter has sacrificed integration and relatedness to the progressive differentiation of knowledge. But this distinction may be more relevant to the recent state of affairs in liberal colleges than to the traditional concern with broad fields of study before the extensive subdivision of those fields which occurred with the vast expansion of knowledge. The trend in the liberal arts seems to have been from liberalizing to specializing features; general education has attempted to reverse the direction.

With the development of specialization, liberal education has attempted to encompass both spread in the student's studies and depth in a particular subject or field. The literature on general education slights depth, but it is not incompatible with it. One of the common purposes of general education is to provide a broader and more meaningful context for specialization.

Whatever the validity of the distinctions considered above, general education is opposed, as it has been conceived and developed in most instances, to the aristocratic view that liberal education should be either the special privilege of a leisure class, the exclusive possession of an intellectual elite, or the distinguishing hallmark of those who practice certain professions instead of engaging in occupations which carry lesser social prestige. It has been asserted that the values of a liberal education, particularly in such fields as literature, history, philosophy, and the fine arts, can be attained only by protracted study and that little is to be gained by trying to extend their benefits to a great body of students, many of whom may have a limited time for unspecialized or pre-professional work. There are those, however, who vigorously assert that there is no aristocratic bias in liberal education. Programs of general education, in any event, are an attempt to offer the advantages of study of the liberal arts, on a minimum basis at least, to all students whatever their special interests or the character of their professional training. As a matter of fact, general education is often made available, either for a shorter or longer period of formal study, to students who probably will not follow any specialized curriculum at all. Furthermore, many programs of general education are devised in whole or in part for students whose intellectual capacity may be too meager to justify either admission to advanced levels of liberal study or to a professional curriculum.

Perhaps it is fair to conclude that if liberal education is broadly conceived in terms of its relevance to human living in our time, the difference between

liberal and general education is recognized as mainly one of degree. Ideally, it would be desirable for all students to have a "fuller" liberal education, but those for whom this is impossible should enjoy the opportunity for a more limited education, expressly designed for individual development and civic responsibility.

While differing in degree, general education and a truly liberal education thus have a common spirit and purpose. In a reference to the general-education program at Columbia University, Carman explained the purposes of that program as follows:

Through the years we have come increasingly to believe that the principal job of Columbia College is to liberate the mind from ignorance, fear, prejudice, and superstition to the end that Columbia men may carry on as effective citizens in a democracy. We want citizens with broad perspective, a critical and constructive approach to life, with standards of value by which they can live nobly. We want them to have a deep sense of responsibility for their fellows and to be persons of integrity easily motivated to action in the cause of freedom and goodwill. We want them to have ability to think, to communicate, to make intelligent and wise judgments, and to evaluate moral situations, and to be able to work effectively to good ends with others.(9)

These should be the purposes of liberal education; as the aims of general education, likewise, they should be attained as fully as the circumstances of the student's education will allow. "I take it we all agree," observes Sidney Hook, "that general education, if it is worth giving, is also, liberal education."(10)

#### The Purpose of the Yearbook

Such considerations as those discussed above often do not enter into faculty discussion and program-making in general education. As Dean Carman has observed, institutions have "rushed madly forward to climb on the bandwagon of general education" without taking the time and effort to think through the fundamental issues and problems involved. The purpose of this yearbook is to stimulate faculties to define basic considerations, to make the necessary investigations, and to arrive at decisions with clear realization of their implications for all aspects of the educational process.

The aim of the yearbook, therefore, is analytical rather than descriptive. It is intended to explore fundamental issues, principles, and problems rather than to summarize institutional programs or outline courses that have been devised especially for general education. Descriptions of these programs and courses have appeared in many articles and books in recent years, and these sources are readily available. Analytical treatments, however, are not so numerous, and frequently the descriptive accounts do not relate practice to underlying questions and alternatives. The purpose of the yearbook committee was probably too ambitious, but if the chapters that follow encourage basic thinking, the project will have been justified.

#### The Foundations of General Education

The basic rationale for general education is to be found in philosophy, psychology, and sociology. The philosophical and sociological foundations are somewhat different from the psychological. The first two involve value problems primarily. It is true that educational objectives and processes are inevitably conditioned by social forces and that determinable social trends constitute some of the factual data that may be used, together with other factors, in making decisions about the purposes and content of education. But educational aims and procedures will also be determined by the social values that we decide to inculcate or which we accept as the goals of associated living. These values may reflect the social milieu faithfully; they may be accepted implicitly or on the basis of sociological fact-finding. Or, in varying degrees they may presage departures from the status quo, thus serving as ideal representations of a different and presumably better society.

(9) Harry J. Carman, "A Critical Analysis of the Social Sciences in General Education," in Proceedings of the Conference on General Education at Florida State University, November 21-23, 1950.

(10) Sidney Hook, "General Education: Its Nature and Purposes," in General Education in Transition, pp. 68-82. Edited by H. T. Morse. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951.

Philosophy, even more than sociology, represents (but again not exclusively) a system of values; "the philosophy of an age, a culture, or a civilization consists of a set of general ideas about the ends of human life and the principles of nature" (Taylor, chap. ii). General education will be implicitly or explicitly conditioned by these general ideas or the lack of them.

The psychological foundations of education, in contrast to philosophical and sociological bases, are presumably grounded in scientific knowledge of human development and behavior. Therefore, the psychology of general education is concerned more with means than with ends. Yet knowledge of the human organism and how it changes should also influence conceptions of educational aims and values. The nature of interests, aptitudes, and abilities, their distribution among and within individuals, the way in which human beings learn and the manner and extent of their ability to transfer their learning from one situation to another--these and other factors related to educability should influence educational purposes as well as educational methods.

Chapters ii-iv of the yearbook are devoted to an exploration of the philosophical, psychological, and sociological approaches to general education. To avoid independent treatment of these interrelated foundations as far as possible, the authors of these three chapters together outlined their manuscripts and later interchanged and reviewed them. First drafts of these chapters were then made available to the other authors as they prepared their manuscripts. As a means of giving as much coherence as possible to the volume, the writers of subsequent chapters were asked to base their discussion as far as feasible on the issues outlined in the three foundation chapters. There was no desire to impose this scheme of organization rigidly, however, and so the authors were not asked to accept the generalizations of chapters ii-iv unless they wished to do so, and they were encouraged to go beyond them, if necessary, for a full and adequate analysis of their own topics.

#### Subject-Matter-Centered vs. Student-Centered Programs

Chapters v, vi and vii discuss the role of the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences respectively, in general education. These chapters reflect the dominant practice of organizing programs of general education around fields of knowledge. Chapter viii, on the other hand, takes the position that the point of departure and the center of organization should not be the subject matter (however well-integrated) but the student. The thesis of this chapter is that "the nature of a particular group of students, the qualities of individuals, and the need of society for individuals trained in common understanding and enlightened behavior must be considered when plans are made for their education."

Some readers may ask whether these two approaches need be so antithetical as chapter viii contends; whether both the internal structure of fields of knowledge and the relationships of its substance and methodology to individual and social needs cannot be compatibly determining in educational planning. In any event, as Morse points out in the final chapter, it is common to find both forms of course organization in many programs of general education. For example, the General College of the University of Minnesota offers courses in "Human Biology" and "The Growth of American Democracy" alongside those in "Home Life Orientation" and "Vocational Orientation." Many courses included in the Sarah Lawrence program seem to correspond to departmental courses offered in many other institutions. And President Taylor observes that some of the general-education offerings at Harvard look much like certain other courses at Sarah Lawrence.

#### Instructional Problems

The extent to which the objectives of general education are realized in student behavior is a function not only of the organization of courses and curriculums, but also of how teachers teach and how students learn. The fundamental principles of learning, so far as psychologists now know them, are summarized in chapter iii. Their more explicit bearing on some of the major instructional problems in general education is discussed in chapter ix.

#### Personnel Work and the Extracurriculum

The importance attached to student personnel work and to extraclassroom activities as means of general education varies considerably from one writer or one institution to another. If the purpose of general education is thought to be mastery of a prearranged curriculum, the function of student personnel work would seem to be limited to such things as admitting students who possess the necessary intellectual aptitude and ability, or of aiding students to keep their heads above water as they proceed through the educational program. On the other hand, personnel services will play quite a different role if the curriculum is to be

adapted to the individual student, as they will if one of the principal aims of general education is to enable the individual to understand himself and to attain a satisfactory personal and social adjustment. These problems are discussed in chapter x.

The extracurriculum could be a source both of cultural enrichment and of constructive experience in social relations. Yet, as Williamson points out in chapter xi, its educative effect may actually run counter to desirable forms of social campus life fully exploited or fruitfully correlated with the more formal means of general and liberal education. Dean Williamson's chapter is a much-needed analysis of this problem.

#### Evaluation

A significant aspect of the problem of evaluation of programs of general education is indicated by a recent pronouncement of the United States Commissioner of Education.

To a very large degree these developments known as general education have proceeded on the basis of a priori reasoning with very little more than opinion to back up the assumptions on which they rest. With a few striking exceptions, little attempt has been made to determine experimentally whether one arrangement of subject matter, or one method of teaching, is better than another, or better than more conventional forms and practices.(11)

This raises the fundamental question on evaluation both of short-term and long-term outcomes of general education. In chapter xii Eckert analyses the problems and procedures involved in attempts to answer the following questions about general education: "Do these programs achieve the objectives that have been set for them? Are these objectives the proper ones or might the ends themselves have been conceived differently?"

#### Administrative Organization

Administrative organization is a means, not an end. If general education is to be strictly divorced from vocational education or specialization, one kind of administrative structure may be indicated. If general and specialized education are to proceed together, and perhaps interdependently, another kind may be required. If the student is to conform to a "standard" curriculum, certain administrative forms and procedures may be satisfactory. If the curriculum is to conform to the student, quite different ones may be necessary. The problems of organization and administration may differ in two-year and four-year colleges. Administrative organization will depend also on whether departmental, inter-divisional, or divisional courses, or some combination of these types, are offered. These and other aspects of administrative organization for general education are analyzed in chapter xiii.

#### The Teacher

The best-laid plans for general education are likely to go awry if teachers are unsympathetic with the purposes and the program, or if their educational interests and backgrounds unfit them for the kind of teaching which general education requires even if they believe in its values. How "both the character and quality of any program of general education will largely reflect the purposes of those who teach in it, and their skill in achieving those purposes," is discussed by Bigelow in chapter xiv. He considers also the deficiencies of preparation for teaching in program of general education and suggests changes that might be made in teacher education to secure better-fitted teaching personnel.

#### Developing the Program

It is true that most college and university teachers have been educated, selected, and appointed as specialists. It is also true that while it is increasingly possible to secure staff especially trained for participation in general education, most institutions will have to rely on these same specialists in planning and conducting the program. How to stimulate their interest in such a program, their active participation in deciding questions of ends and means, and their wholehearted co-operation in counseling and teaching, are problems which are discussed in chapter xv.

(11) Earl J. McGrath, "The Need for Experimentation and Research, in General Education in Transition, chap. ii. Edited by H. T. Morse. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1951.

The Program as a Whole

Most of this yearbook has been devoted to an analysis of basic educational questions and issues drawn mainly from theoretical writings rather than institutional practices. How are these considerations reflected in actual programs of general education? When one looks at institutional practices, can he find clear-cut examples of the rationalist, neo-humanist, and instrumentalist points of view or is he likely to discover that most programs reflect varied points of view and therefore are inconsistent within themselves? And the reader may ask how defensible it would be to adopt one of the three philosophical positions outlined in chapter ii, select only faculty members who accept this position, and build an educational program which faithfully reflects it.

Whatever the answers to such questions as these, there are common problems in over-all planning for general education. How shall general education at the college level be articulated with that in the secondary school? Are courses devised especially for the purposes of general education adequate foundations for specialized study? Shall general education be separated sharply in sequence, administrative organization, and spirit from vocational and professional education?

These questions are reviewed in the final chapter of the yearbook, which offers, as well, a brief critique of the general-education movement.