

THE UNIVERSITY - 1968

Feringer notes

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Lecture 1

1. What is a university expected to achieve?: ERH asserts that the university, as with all schools, is intended to prepare one for the future, and that in the present day, not only has it lost its way, but students also are concerned only with the present, the next course, the next exam! "The world of the universities has detached itself from the human future." (p.3)

2. The professors may be interested in the future of physics, or of math, but not of the human race. The well-known aphorism defining the attitude of academics is - knowledge is good for its own sake.

3. Today the university seems to be "...a workshop for plumbers..." (p.11)

4. A university ---

...is only a university if the questions of human race are kept in obedience there, and alive in these little groups, so that at a decisive moment they can come forward and speak with authority to the rest of the world and make them see this in union. (p.4)

Here ERH refers to the original purpose of the university to convene, or to consult with the community councils for the purpose of speaking out on issues of the day. In those days their chief concern was the future of the community.

5. These issues cannot be discussed out of the context of history and of what is to be done to create a future. Issues cannot, or should not, be discussed without such reference. He reminds us that any issue;

...is not a moment in time without relation to past and future, but it is a relation to everything positive that has gone on before, and everything that depends on you and me to achieve in the future. The university has the longest breath--just as the president of the United States has the shortest breath. (p.4)

6. Here ERH defines past and present. It is not the time of the physicist, because the purpose of the community is to survive and change, so that it progresses. In social life, if there is no beginning of time, as assumed by natural scientists, there can be no progress. Progress forces us to cite a time when some movement in a community began. That is why the Bible begins with the statement, "In the beginning..."

The future is known as much as the past. Only the present is not known, because we don't know what cowards we are, what criminals we are, what liars we are. Because you and I are unknown--we are the X in the equation--it is not known what the present will be like tomorrow... Will you stand up and tell the truth? Will you? It probably doesn't pay, I mean, in your eyes. (p.7)

Social time relates to phases of social processes, time spans for making peace, for a courtship or a friendship, or trust, or a reputation to be established.

7. The timespan of the future is proportional to our memory of the past, in the sense that the longer our historical reach, the greater the insight we have into the range and consequences of human actions; of what we need to know about continuing issues into the future and what is yet undone. For instance, few people seem to believe that all of humankind is one, and thus, war continues. The essential orientation of thought is that without thinking about direction, the society tends to drift.

The University - 1968 - Review

Here the author summarizes his "dis-ease" with the modern university. He sees its present emphasis on "knowledge for its own sake" as having rendered the university impotent, because it does not deal with each subject in the context of its relevance in creating a future for the community. In some detail he lays out what it should be if it is to serve this crucial purpose.

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