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let alone to undertake deeper soulcraft. And to what higher calling could a university aspire?

What stands in our way of truly facing up to the task of formation? We have begun to see that this is not a simple matter of curricular reform. Structural features of the modern multiversity obscure and obstruct the project of forming whole persons for meaningful, flourishing lives. In the next section, we discuss what is perhaps the most surprising of these structural features, the fact that the faculty itself has largely lost sight of this core educational project. The hollowness runs deeper than the formalism of our distribution requirements. Disturbingly, it extends right into the plexus of those who would be entrusted to embody and animate a formative curriculum.

A SKELETON FACULTY

> The function of the college is to present to the students' attention in concentrated form all the questions that the sophomore in man has raised for himself through the ages and which he has then spent the rest of his history trying to resolve, rephrase, or learn to live with.
> —William Perry[136]

> Let a man once acquire the habit of turning every experience into a purely intellectual affair . . . and it is amazing how quickly he will shrivel in the process until reduced to a rattling skeleton. We all know it, we all see it. How is it possible then for [students] not to shy away in terror from these skeleton men?
> —Friedrich Nietzsche[137]

In the previous section, we searched in vain, from the classroom to the dorm room, for signs of life in contemporary general education. Courses scatter, and there is no reliable provision of space for the sort of dialogues in which such experiences could be integrated into a genuine expansion of outlook and deepening of character. However, we neglected one important setting where such integrative dialogues might occur: advisement. Let's return to the example from the previous section of the computer engineering major who took the five heterogeneous Gen Ed classes. Ideally, there would be an advisor who really knows this student, someone with the time, interest,

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and intellectual curiosity to explore, say, how the ethical dilemmas of business relate to the legacy of slavery, or how our modern, technologically saturated lives compare to those of the Vikings and the Incas. While such dialogues might occur somewhat more frequently in smaller, more learner-centered institutions, at most universities it is unclear who is positioned to engage students in this way.

Compared to faculty, professional academic advisors are more readily available, more informed about curricular requirements and resources on campus, and better prepared to counsel students through personal difficulties. However, they are not necessarily prepared to work the intersection of the personal and the intellectual, to explore with students how the curriculum informs (and perhaps glosses over) the questions of who one should be and how one should live. As one recent article put it, perhaps a bit harshly, "Most academic advising is a rote, bureaucratic exercise in checking off boxes."[138] Faculty mentors may be better prepared to deal with questions of intellectual substance, but they are less readily available.[139] Office hours fill up, or students assume that they shouldn't bother a professor unless they have a pressing issue or fairly focused question. In any case, it is not clear that faculty are any better prepared for this kind of clumsy conversation that crosses disciplines and fuses the personal with the intellectual.

Obviously, faculty members differ one from the next, but we can make some useful generalizations based on how we educate, recruit, and incentivize the professoriate. Note, first, that professors are themselves products of the modern multiversity and its hollow, disjointed approach to Gen Ed. There are certainly exceptions to this rule. There are institutions where humane learning has not yet been crowded out by hyperspecialization, technicism, and jobbification. And there are zealous students on every campus who blow right past the bureaucracy to find the substance. I am not claiming that it is the most cynical credentialers who choose to stay in academia. But neither should we imagine that the professoriate is drawn from the most well-rounded liberal learners. The epigraph from William Perry gives us a glimpse into the academic imagination circa 1968. This existentialist, formative ideal is still visible, but in order to affirm it, Perry has to clear a bit of rhetorical room. Jokes about sophomores are almost as perennial as existential questions. With the phrase "the sophomore in man," Perry tackles this discourse head on, rehabilitating the maligned figure as the wonderful, unjaded voice in all of us. Fifty years later, I do not know

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how many students find their college education organized around Perry's ideal (fewer than half think that "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" rises to the level of "very important").[140] In any case, these are not the students that typically find their way into graduate school. Most doctoral programs are looking for students who quickly outgrew this "sophomoric" tendency, and they offer, just in case, a multiyear curriculum to help you distance yourself from those awkward human questions that do not resolve into matters of fact or opinion, cannot be crammed into a disciplinary compartment, and will not sort neatly into the professional and the personal.

William Arrowsmith—a classicist, translator, and humane intellectual whose interests ranged from Aristophanes to Antonioni, brings this point home with brutal honesty:

> The most remarkable and agonizing feature of graduate education is, I think, the gulf between one's studies and one's life, between what we read and how we live. Our studies are alienated from our lives and—such is our professionalism—we are usually required to side with our studies against ourselves, against our lives.
>
> We begin as graduate students to live professionally, and there is almost always a severe and personal loss. We become a little less human, we lose our involvement in the present. Alternatively, we compartmentalize our lives and keep something like bankers' hours with the books; the rest of the day is our own. But for the first time, one feels a real gulf.[141]

Some may be dazzled by this ability of *Homo academicus* to divide and winnow the self. A close reader of Nietzsche, Arrowsmith is uncowed by such ascetic feats. He refuses to equate seriousness with "stultifying professionalism" and "wretched pedantry."[142] The main form of rigor he finds in academia is rigor mortis. Sharp shears and a steady hand are not intrinsic goods: it makes all the difference what parts of yourself you are lopping off. When *Homo academicus* looks in the mirror, he sees a great "hunger artist"; Arrowsmith sees in him only "a small scholar and a learned but shallow man."[143] When he wants to talk to someone truly serious, Arrowsmith seeks out Perry's sophomore. Unlike most graduate students, he explains,

> The undergraduate still acts as though he were a single human being, still integrated; he asks that what he learns should have some pertinence to his life; he acts as though the present really mattered. He can be touched by the urgency of experience, in a book or a man, even when that experience lies beyond his own.

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It is therefore good to teach him, since his demands show us what is urgent, present, and serious in ourselves.[144]

I think that Arrowsmith is right about this. Doctoral education too often breeds compartmentalization, alienation, and desiccation. And for those who manage to stay in touch with "the possibility of the search" (Walker Percy), who escape with "a ripeness of self" (Arrowsmith again), two further cullings await.[145] First comes the job search. Here, aspiring and accomplished monomaniacs have a big advantage. Search committees are looking for proven and potential research productivity, not the dynamic wholeness we examined in the previous sections. Candidates whose interests appear too varied will be described as "all over the place." Only the narrowly specialized are likely to be able to squeeze through the search committee's fine sieve.

Second, for any oddball lifelong-liberal-learners who happen to land tenure-track jobs, there awaits the powerful informal curriculum of the tenure and promotion process.[146] Whether this extended ritual is successful at sorting the scholarly wheat from the unproductive chaff is open to doubt. It is, however, undoubtedly successful at socializing the faculty into a very particular way of understanding themselves and their work. It is not just that faculty are incentivized to prioritize research over teaching and service (and note that mentoring does not even have a firm foothold in either of these devalued categories). The most profound lesson of this informal curriculum is its erasure of the vital formative links between mind and body, knowing and doing, the personal and the social, understanding and self-cultivation. We could not prioritize research over teaching and service had we not already learned to think of them as separate, distorting each in the process. We learn to think of research as a kind of disinterested, disembodied, dislocated knowing, purified of personal bias, creaturely needs, and the messy particulars of time and place. The humane tradition of the essay—with its existential mode of address from one searching subject to others—has now all but given way to the voiceless research report, written for everyone and no one. Not that we have time to read each other's work anyway. We prefer proxies such as grant dollars, citation indices, and publication poundage. This closes the vicious circle, as the push to publish ever more eats up the time one might have had for reading.

There is an ethics, if an attenuated one, in the way we talk about academic labor. We rely on the problematic ethical shortcut of contrasting

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self-interested inclination with altruistic duty. We then imagine a spectrum stretching from research as inclination (if admittedly as a strange hybrid of rarified intellectual interest and careerism), through the mixed bag of teaching (we call it "a load," but also remark on its rewards), to the other largely dutiful obligations we call "service." This has to be considered a professional miseducation, since it erases a concept central to both ethics and education: self-cultivation.[147] It is true that all serious learning entails some form of unlearning, as we surrender mistaken beliefs and reconstruct experience. However, what the informal curriculum of tenure and promotion asks developing scholars to unlearn is the very integrity of the work. In research universities, professors are told to divide their time between three buckets: 40% research, 40% teaching, and 20% service. We forget that all of this might well be described as one complex educational engagement: seeking understanding in community, we also tend to the conditions that foster community and support learning. In hell, all it takes to forget is a quick drink from the river Lethe; in academia, the process takes an average of fourteen years.[148]

Given this process of scholarly formation, I think we have to consider it a matter of dumb luck when we do find well-rounded and integrated professors on campus. Common sense dictates that if we really cared about general education, we would actively cultivate a faculty who themselves received a first-rate general education and who bring an ongoing commitment to their own personal formation. As Maxine Greene puts it, "A teacher in search of his/her own freedom may be the only kind of teacher who can arouse young persons to go in search of their own."[149]

In this light, consider the recent candid self-assessment from Steven Pinker, the Johnstone Family Professor of Psychology at Harvard University and winner of the Humanist of the Year award in 2020. Pinker was responding to William Deresiewicz's claim, in *Excellent Sheep*, that elite higher education fails to provide a "real education," one that addresses students "as complete human beings rather than as future specialists" and helps them "to build a self or (following Keats) to become a soul."[150] Deresiewicz was surprised by the tenor of the responses he received, finding it dismaying "that so many individuals associated with [elite] institutions said not, 'Of course we provide our students with a real education,' but rather, 'What is this real education nonsense, anyway?'"[151] Here is Pinker's version of the "guilty-as-charged" comeback:

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> Perhaps I am emblematic of everything that is wrong with elite American education, but I have no idea how to get my students to build a self or become a soul. It isn't taught in graduate school, and in the hundreds of faculty appointments and promotions I have participated in, we've never evaluated a candidate on how well he or she could accomplish it.[152]

To Deresiewicz's claim that we have lost sight of the core task of higher education, Pinker's response seems to be, "Really, well, I don't see it anywhere." If we supply the hidden premise, the counterclaim becomes a little more logical but even less flattering, as Pinker seems to be mounting what we might call "the argument from one's own importance." Here is the syllogism: (1) I am important; (2) I don't know how to do this; (3) therefore, it isn't important.

Actually, Pinker's retort is quite instructive if we, as Richard Rorty once put it, "take away the sneer."[153] This sort of cynical functionalism—the university is whatever the university currently does—is like a temporary blindness that could be cured if only the afflicted could see the medicine right in front of them. In this case, hyperspecialization leaves us unable to grasp the antidote of cross-disciplinary conversation. There is actually an interesting question at the heart of Pinker's retort: How could it be that the leading examples of an institution fail to embody the purposes of that institution? What if Pinker, instead of firing off his riposte to Deresiewicz from his office, had taken his concern out onto the quad. Permit me to play out the scene as a Pinkeresque character bumps into colleagues from philosophy, East Asian studies, and classics all eager to take up the question.

> PHILOSOPHER: I get what you're saying. Imagine someone who believes that libraries are failed institutions whose true purpose is to host rowdy parties. Instead of writing opinion pieces about how "the library has gone quiet," maybe it's time to revise your theory in light of actual practice.
>
> PINKERESQUE PROF.: Exactly!
>
> PHILOSOPHER: But it's also true that practices can drift away from their animating ideals.
>
> PINKERESQUE PROF.: I think the DJs would have noticed had their club gone quiet and started filling up with books.

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PHILOSOPHER: Except you're speeding up the film. When the change is gradual enough, and the name of the original practice stays plastered on the building, even radical metamorphosis can go unnoticed. It was this possibility that kept Kierkegaard up at night. "In all of Christendom," he asks, "is there a Christian?"[154]

PINKERESQUE PROF.: You're not going to win me over with religious examples.

EAST ASIAN STUDIES PROFESSOR: Why that's remarkable! Who knew that Kierkegaard was Confucian? Can I share a wonderful moment in the *Analects?*

PINKERESQUE PROF.: If you must.

EAST ASIAN STUDIES PROFESSOR: It's in Book Thirteen. Zilu asks what a leader's top priority should be. When the Master replies that the obvious first step is "to rectify names," Zilu blurts out that the Master must be joking, as surely there are more pressing things to take care of. So, the Master gives his lovable but blundering associate a verbal rap on the knuckles, calling him a "bumpkin" and telling him that "a *Junzi*—an exemplary person—should keep his trap shut when he's out of his depth." Then he explains that, and I quote, "when speech does not accord with reality, actions misfire, rituals wither, laws and punishments miss their mark, and the people do not know where they stand."[155]

PINKERESQUE PROF.: That sounds like a form of linguistic determinism, which I reject.

CLASSICIST: If I can jump in here, I don't think we need to debate Sapir-Whorf to grasp this point. Consider how the word "student" has drifted from its etymological roots as "one with a zeal for learning." Now it just means one in good standing with the registrar.

EAST ASIAN STUDIES PROFESSOR: You couldn't have picked a more Confucian example. During the period in which the *Analects* was compiled, the term *shi*—student, scholar, apprentice—was, as you say, adrift. And so the Master presses for rectification: are you interested in being perceived as refined, or in actually refining your perceptions? Are you "just keeping up an unflappable pretense," or have you set your heart on the Way. In the Confucian tradition, if you have refinement but no ethical substance, you're just a "vulgar pedant." In fact, at one point, the

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Master suggests that it is pointless to teach the credential chasers. He is looking for learners who are truly "agitated" in their desire to know, "fervent" in their search for enlightenment.[156]

PINKERESQUE PROFESSOR: I resonate with that word "agitated."

PHILOSOPHER: Well I guess MacIntyre is Confucian too, because he has this same worry about moral language hollowing out. He talks about a process of bureaucratization, when institutions start to cannibalize the very practices they were built to serve.[157] Hospitals, for example. The aim of a hospital is to support nursing, doctoring, and other medical practices. When things are going well, institutional metrics—donations courted, lawsuits settled, awards received, doctors and nurses retained, etcetera—are subordinated to goods internal to the practices, in this case life, health, comfort, dignity, and so on. But we often start putting the cart before the horse and the institutional logic invades the practices themselves.

PINKERESQUE PROFESSOR: Like the logic of quiet reading that supposedly corrupted the DJs?

PHILOSOPHER: OK, let's try a new thought experiment: To do their work, doctors and nurses need a roof over their heads, and they are happy to pitch in whenever the roof needs repairs. Lately, though, it seems that there are always more repairs to be done. Doctors and nurses have started spending most of their time up on the roof. Now the community, even the doctors and nurses themselves, have starting confusing healing with roofing. But you wouldn't know from the way they talk about "the spine" (the ridge), "bones" (rafters), "wounds" (leaks), and "bandages" (shingles).

PINKERESQUE PROFESSOR: Sorry, but your metaphor has sprung a leak. I think I would notice if these so-called doctors tried to fix my broken arm with roofing nails.

CLASSICIST: Look around. Don't you see that we're on that roof right now. The word "research" now means grant-getting, "teaching" means generating IUs, and "learning" means collecting credits.

[With that the Pinkeresque Professor has had enough and departs]

Alas, in the real world, faculty are too busy cranking out articles or answering email to linger on the quad. But the ideas presented here are not fanciful.

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They speak directly to the Deresiewicz-Pinker exchange. Deresiewicz is essentially asking the Kierkegaardian question: Among all of the diploma holders, is there an educated person? And Pinker's reply suggests the way in which institutional corruption covers its own tracks. We think that what it means to be a professor is to do research and also to transmit to students the knowledge and methods of one's discipline. And so we set up universities accordingly. And then, when pressed, we react with rhetorical flourish: What other role could the faculty in such an institution possibly have?

As my quad colloquium suggests, the untimely voice of the past is our great resource in escaping such self-reinforcing spirals. Thus, humane critics of the contemporary university seek out voices that fit neither the present nor its version of the past. For instance, Arrowsmith honed his critique of *Homo academicus* in dialogue with Nietzsche's "unmodern observations" about the new ethos of academic research taking shape around him in the 1870s.[158] The second epigraph to this section gives you a sense of what Nietzsche thought of this new scholarly type. And I think I know which of Nietzsche's observations Arrowsmith would have offered, had he joined our quad colloquium: "It is therefore a matter of professional self-interest . . . to prevent the appearance of any view of the teacher's mission higher than what [the faculty] are capable of satisfying."[159]

Andrew Delbanco similarly rejects the idea that one will find an adequate description of this mission in our current manual of standard operating procedures. He reaches a bit further into the prehistory of the modern research university, finding his untimely alternative in an entry in Emerson's journal of 1834:

> The whole secret of the teacher's force lies in the conviction that men are convertible. And they are. They want awakening. Get the soul out of bed, out of her deep habitual sleep.[160]

Delbanco is well aware of our self-reinforcing loops, noting how this idea of teaching as awakening and reorientation will seem utterly out of place in a university that conceives of itself as making and transmitting "a growing sum of discoveries no longer in need of rediscovery once they are recorded."[161] And yet, as Delbanco suggests, Emerson's words still resonate:

> None of us who has ever been a student can fail to read this passage without remembering some teacher by whom we were startled out of complacency

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> about our own ignorance. For this to take place, the student must be open to it, and the teacher must overcome the incremental fatigue of repetitive work and somehow remain a professor in the religious sense of that word—ardent, exemplary, even fanatic.[162]

If education means awakening someone to the possibilities of soul action, then students need teachers who are themselves existentially in motion, teachers who exemplify this process of trying to get the soul out of bed. Delbanco is not talking about professing faith in a literal sense but simply suggesting that professors stand behind what they teach. Instruction requires mere content; formative education demands that ideas are voiced, held, lived. Though the classroom is neither a church nor a courtroom, teachers must *testify*. As Goethe writes to Schiller, after reading some Kant, "I hate everything that merely instructs me, without quickening or directly igniting my own activity."[163] When we divide fact and value, method and substance, life and work, we lapse into mere instruction. And, as we saw, names stand in need of rectification. A professor who has grown cynical and detached, or simply numb through overwork, is not in this sense a *professor*. We cannot claim to care about the whole student if we allow the life of the mind to become a disembodied, "purely intellectual affair," a game played by "rattling skeletons." "Educators, educate!", Nietzsche declares, "But first educators must educate themselves."[164]

This is the driving theme of Bruce Wilshire's bold and I think underappreciated book, *The Moral Collapse of the University*. Arriving right on the heels of Allan Bloom's famous polemic, Wilshire's title likely misled readers to suspect another moralizing screed.[165] In fact, Wilshire's project stands in marked contrast to Bloom's. Where Bloom wags his finger at students' sophomoric ways and the "Nietzschean" relativistic culture that reared them, Wilshire enlists Nietzsche (along with James, Dewey, Mary Douglas, and others) to help us examine our own scholarly habitus, and especially our urge to dissociate from the "archaic energies of identity formation" in ourselves and our students.[166] What Wilshire calls "moral collapse" is the kind of corruption we examined with MacIntyre, Confucius, and Kierkegaard. The problem is ethical disorientation, not moral misconduct. Indeed, for Wilshire, it is our unacknowledged fear of moral pollution that drives the collapse. In our rites of professionalization and specialization, Wilshire sees a "veiled purification ritual" that alienates us from the telos of education.

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So, Nietzsche may be right that, before we can educate, we need to educate ourselves; but before we can educate ourselves, we must understand ourselves. And this, self-knowledge, is just what the compartmentalization of *Homo academicus* debars. On this point, Wilshire draws inspiration from another of Nietzsche's observations, the opening line of *The Genealogy of Morals*, "We knowers are unknown to ourselves."[167] We must try to understand how it is that we scholars could have developed, along with our erudition, an allergy to education itself. We describe teaching as a "load"; we prioritize graduate teaching; we laugh embarrassedly when the personal intrudes into academic discussion. "Educators, educate," but first we must understand and overcome our aversion to the messy particularities of human becoming. In the meantime, scholarship and instruction continue apace.

For Wilshire, and for Dewey before him, the central fault line in the academic soul, the root dichotomy distorting education, is the divorce of mind from body. In a passage that ties together some of the themes of this section and anticipates the next, Wilshire offers this understated indictment of the modern university:

> The research university purports to be also an educational institution. Not to grasp the significance of self as body-self undermines every essential feature of the educating act. Self-reflexivity and self-knowledge become impaired, or impossible. Thus, one's ultimate responsibility as a free knower becomes impaired or impossible: to discover and accept the truth about oneself—and to exemplify this self-awareness wherever appropriate. But also knowledge of one's most intimate relations to others in the community becomes impossible, e.g., relations to the young, to students. . . . It is still another destructive dualism to divide in any wholesale way the personal growth of the professor from the education of the young placed in his or her care.[168]

What form of soulcraft could heal such a basic rift? What does self-knowledge look like in this corporeal key? How do we rattling skeletons search for a more resonant core? How can we reembody the life of the mind? As it turns out, a surprising episode in the life of John Dewey speaks to these exact questions, offering us an extended case study of the arduous nature and integrative possibilities of soul action. In the next section, we travel back to 1916, where we find Dewey having just completed his brilliant deconstruction of the liberal-vocational dichotomy on paper, and just beginning to confront this rift in himself.

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Undeclared

A Philosophy of Formative Higher Education

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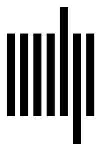
Citation:

Undeclared: A Philosophy of Formative Higher Education
By: Chris Higgins
DOI: 10.7551/mitpress/15228.001.0001
ISBN (electronic): 9780262377607
Publisher: The MIT Press
Published: 2024

The open access edition of this book was made possible by generous funding and support from MIT Press Direct to Open



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The MIT Press would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers who provided comments on drafts of this book. The generous work of academic experts is essential for establishing the authority and quality of our publications. We acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of these otherwise uncredited readers.

This book was set in Bembo Book MT Pro by Westchester Publishing Services.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Higgins, Chris, 1967– author.
Title: Undeclared : a philosophy of formative higher education / Chris Higgins.
Description: Cambridge, Massachusetts : The MIT Press, 2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2023028597 (print) | LCCN 2023028598 (ebook) | ISBN 9780262547499 (paperback) | ISBN 9780262377614 (epub) | ISBN 9780262377607 (pdf)
Subjects: LCSH: Education, Higher—Aims and objectives.
Classification: LCC LB2322.2 .H487 2024 (print) | LCC LB2322.2 (ebook) | DDC 378/.01—dc23/eng/20230814
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023028597
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