

democratization) which bear directly on skill acquisition, the authors outline some considerations for policy development.

In summary, this book leaves the sobering message that students have not been satisfactorily acquiring basic skills. Hall and Carlton seem to be operating from the underlying assumption that this is a change from “the good old days.” From the methodology employed, one may query: “Have students *ever satisfactorily* acquired the basis?” Educators lament the situation regarding basic skills in school; whereas, employers are more concerned with declining work commitment. In order to assess the “back to basics” argument adequately, a panel design would be appropriate. To rely heavily on administrators’, teachers’ and employers’ retroactive memories to assess the situation, as Hall and Carlton have done, may be questionable. Likewise, students’ self-assessments may not be adequate measures of actual proficiencies, i.e., self-assessments are influenced by the milieu in which they occur. More objective measurements seem desirable.

Nevertheless, if we accept the validity of the measurements reported in this monograph, there is cause for considerable concern. It appears that no single social system must “shoulder the blame” for the deficiencies in mathematics and English. Rather, they result from rapid social and cultural change. Perhaps the educational institutions need to reconsider their goals and objectives. In short, this monograph should be read and considered by all educators. It has “much food for thought.”

Merlin B. Brinkerhoff
Department of Sociology
The University of Calgary

Claude T. Bissell, *Humanities in the University*, Legon, University of Ghana, 1977. 82 pp.

In his foreword to this book, Vice-Chancellor D.A. Bekoe of the University of Ghana, Legon, explains that it comprises the 1976 Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorial Lectures, an annual series established in 1957. He proceeds to a sketch of Dr. Bissell’s distinguished career, that concludes with his appointment at Toronto as “University Professor, a position which conferred on him the freedom to teach, study, and write as he sees fit.”

Early this year, within a week after receiving Dr. Bissell’s book, I was given to read a report prepared only a short time previously by the student association at Legon, dealing with the recent invasions of the campus by police. Attached were statements by individual students who had been subjected to obscenely brutal attacks and beatings, many of them resulting in serious injuries, some permanent. The students had been forced to abandon the campus; whether they have yet returned is not clear to me. I know of only one reference to these events by the Canadian news media, and that was a passing allusion in a piece reprinted from *The Economist*. Such is life in the Global Village, where the freedom to teach, study, and write as one sees fit becomes steadily more tenuous. One wonders how a “world-wide electronic dialogue” such as Dr. Bissell at one point mentions, would affect it.

In truth, it is more important than ever that those who can do so – especially those who can do so with acknowledged authority – should speak out for that freedom. Scho-

lars in the humanities have a particular responsibility to do so; in the universities it is the humanities that must be primarily concerned with helping us, as Dr. Bissell says,

to understand our inner world of thought, dreams, wish and aspiration and therefore. . . to undermine the terrible assumption implicit in the technological point of view that human beings are units in a system to be manipulated in accordance with a concept of efficiency.

He goes on to say that the humanities must provide a rejoinder to the “technological point of view” by keeping alive the perspectives of history, and that (most importantly, in his view) they must continue to assert the prerogatives of the “world of the imagination” and to explore it. He does not discuss the necessity of freedom: his recognition of it is implicit in what he says.

The special responsibilities of the humanities are the subject of the book. It deals with the evolution of their role, notably under the impact of the nineteenth-century rise of modern science and of nationalism – both carried into our own decades, of course – and the twentieth-century explosion of technological skills and their applications. Given the lecture-series format, it was not possible for the subject to be examined in detail. One is grateful to have it even somewhat cursorily treated, and some of its issues raised, with candour and urbanity, by one who has acted in and reflected on the university scene from many points of view.

With some of Dr. Bissell’s judgments – especially those related to technology – I disagree, at least as to their emphasis. For example, he is far more impressed than I am (or ever was) by Marshall McLuhan, who has always seemed to me a scholar who almost became a fine critic but took to reading billboards seriously. What became of the “Marshall McLuhan Dew-Line Newsletter” that was announced in glossy magazines a decade ago? It promised “a startling, shocking Early Warning System for our era of instant change!” The universities of Ontario must have failed to subscribe to it, at all events. But the spectacle of technological encrustations has always tended to set me off into fits of irreverent Bergsonian laughter.

The final lecture, which contains Dr. Bissell’s statement of the three special concerns of the humanities to which I have already referred, he calls “The Faith of a Humanist.” He begins with what is almost an apology for the title – and I wonder why. If the humanities address the world of thought, dream, aspiration, myth, imagination, archetype, they surely do so in a rooted belief in the actuality and profound significance of such a world. If they have no such belief, then indeed their case is a dishonourable one, and their proponents would be more honestly (and profitably) engaged in writing scripts for T.V. commercials – as some do, of course – than in talking with students about poetry. Happily, Dr. Bissell retrieves the apologetic note, but I wish it had never been sounded. He concludes with a humanistic reminder of the responsibilities of the whole university in our time. It is an eloquent statement, and it sent me to one of similar intent, by another professor. At the end of his Presidential address to the Classical Association sixty years ago, which he called *Religio Grammatici*, Gilbert Murray – who was to devote his life equally to scholarship and the cause of world peace – wrote of the enemies that beset the scholar, whether scientist or humanist, and of the strengths that lie in “Grammata”, letters: the world of letters.

The Philistine, the vulgarian, the Great Sophist, the passer of base coin for true, he is all about us and, worse, he has his outposts inside us, persecuting our peace, spoiling our sight, confusing our values, making a man's self seem greater than the race and the present thing more important than the eternal. From him and his influence we find our escape by means of the Grammata into that calm world of theirs, where stridency and clamour are forgotten in the ancient stillness, and that which was in its essence material and transitory has for the most part perished, while the things of the spirit still shine like stars.

Humanities in the University is a useful reminder of the starlight.

J. Percy Smith
 Professor of Drama
 College of Arts
 University of Guelph

Leopold Infeld, *Why I Left Canada: Reflections on Science and Politics*, Lewis Pyenson, ed., Toronto, McGill-Queens University Press, 1978. 272 pp.

This is the fascinating story of a man whose experiences and accomplishments few can match. I had known Leopold well during his twelve years (1938-1950) on the staff in Applied Mathematics at the University of Toronto, and indeed wrote a short biography of him which was published by the Royal Society of Canada after his death in 1968. Interestingly enough, there has also just appeared a biography written by his son Eryk – *His Life and Scientific Work* – published in the series Polish Men of Science by the Polish Academy and Physical Society. This latter book is largely devoted to Infeld's scientific work with Max Born and others.

Why I left Canada begins with a foreword by Alfred Schild who was his student in Toronto and has been on the staff of the University of Texas in Austin. Unfortunately Schild died just before the book came out. Infeld's writings were in Polish and were translated by his wife Helen. The table of contents is as follows: *Introduction Canada and Poland, Why I left Canada, Poland, Sketches from the Past: Wladyslaw Nathanson, Bronia, Konin, Einstein, Neils Born and Einstein, Oppenheimer, and The Centenary of Max Planck.*

As a biography, these several sketches from the past provide a background which is very interesting: the story of his sister Bronia and of the school where he taught in Konin after obtaining his Ph.D. with Professor Natanson at the ancient Jagiellonian University in Krakow:

How strange Krakow was then, and how different its studies from those of today! During my whole course I did not take a single written examination; only orals, and even they were not required. They were taken only by those students who were planning to apply for scholarships or who wanted to have closer contact with their professors. Indeed, in theoretical physics where there were no assistants, no exercise hours, no seminars, this was the only way to make closer contact with a professor. During my fifth year of study I went for a half year to Berlin and brought back with me my first piece of research,