

HUMANISTIC EDUCATION IN TODAY'S AND TOMORROW'S WORLD¹

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What kinds of people are most apt to survive and to thrive in the world as it will be in the future? This is clearly not an academic question, but one which is very important for anyone who has to live in a rapidly changing world, a world whose likeness has not been seen before. As time surges relentlessly forward, new vistas are opening up which require humans to be able to chart their own course, lest they be driven to and fro by forces they cannot control. Examples of these new and emerging vistas are numerous. One of them is the emergence of the global computer net work which connects millions together in a way hardly conceivable in the past. Humans can now communicate and participate in activities which span the globe in virtually no time at all. They can obtain and transmit information at their fingertips, from their computers, which are becoming ubiquitous. Another example is the apparently paradoxical trend to localism amidst the tide of globalization. As the world's cultures are becoming more and more similar, at least in outward

appearances, due to increasing communication, the need to assert the identity of a group, or even an individual, is greater than ever before. These opposite forces necessitate a great desire for a sense of direction and purpose.

Humans are at the moment thrust into a void space where they have not been before and where they seem to be at a loss to decide which way to go. The path which has led them to this point has been relatively straight and narrow. Modernism, which has been the leading idea of human functioning until today, is now subject to serious attacks from many quarters. A major legacy of the Enlightenment, modernism is characterized partly by the belief in human progress, defined by pleasures and amenities, and partly by the belief in the power of science and technology to bring about the desired end. However, it is almost universally realized now that this modernistic belief in human progress leads to disaster after disaster, chief among which are weapons capable of destroying everything including human civilization and the wanton destruction of the environment for mere short term gain. Humans are increasingly aware that this belief in progress at any cost is a source of great potential danger, and this is a motivation for an attack on the very

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foundation of modernism on which this belief rests.³

At a time when the faith in modernism is waning, the path for humans is widened. Humans in general are now freer than before to roam, and they are not restricted only to going ahead along a straight and narrow path toward progress. This situation is one which could be the beginning of a greater flourishing of human functioning than ever before in history, or the reverse, where humans lose their sense of direction totally and thus become subject to misery. Thrust in an open space without any tangible experience as to how to proceed, humans need to be equipped with some capabilities which can serve as their guide and furnish their sense of direction in this exhilarating but sometimes frightening environment.

This brings us back to our original question at the beginning of this essay. What kinds of people are most apt to survive and to

prosper in such an open space? Surely those who hold to beliefs in progress and development seem to be incapable of doing so, for these are the source of many miseries and human ills as we have seen. Therefore, humans need to be equipped with a new set of capabilities, one which enables them to make sense of the situation facing them toward the dawn of the next millennium, and which will help them define their goals anew, really to make sense of what it is to be a human, and to chart their own course within the space.

The need to instil a new set of capabilities is obviously the task of one generation of humans, the adults, toward the young. Education is necessary, but not just any type of education can achieve the task. Clearly the type of education characterized by modernism is not able to help the young to face the future confidently and effectively. It is a duty of the older generation, a debt owed to the younger generation in the interest of humanity as a whole, to educate them so as they are best equipped to help themselves in the world of the future.

The kind of education which enables the young to cope best with the world, then, is one that does not presuppose the mere idea of human progress and blind faith in science and technology. Education has to bring into relief the idea that humans now have to define themselves differently from the way they have in the past, and it must enable them to find a direction which is not dictated solely by their material needs and desires. This education has to be premised on the idea that nothing is forever certain, and that there does not exist an objective, clear cut answer to every question. Thus, the aim of the education is that the thoroughly educated are capable of

³ This attack on the modernist belief in the unlimited power of science and technology here apparently centers on but one species of modernism. There are, one might argue, other types which do not place such importance on science and technology. It might be argued that the use of reasoning abilities to raise an awareness of the dangers of the former type of modernism is itself predicated on some kind of modernist belief. That is true, but one cannot fail to acknowledge that the drive to be 'modern,' or to be 'developed,' especially in a 'developing' country like Thailand, seems to have nothing to do with the kind of modernism advocated here—the kind that criticizes untempered faith in science and technology, and seems to have everything to do with the former kind. Thus, this paper could be regarded as putting one kind of modernism against another.

thinking critically and of projecting ahead what has not been seen before. These traits characterize humanistic education. By 'humanistic education' I mean the type of education formulated by the central role afforded by language, meaning and interpretation. The main idea is that everything human centers around these three key concepts, and even the material aspects of the environment depend, in a substantial manner, on language, meaning and interpretation (for the material part of the environment gains its significance only within a human scheme of relations among things).

Humanistic education, moreover, is not limited only to the traditional humanities, for the sciences can indeed be humanistic in this sense if they put more emphasis on the role of language and interpretation. Thus, to conduct a scientific study humanistically, so to speak, is to be aware that the study is but one part of the whole that is human reality. Solutions to scientific or technological problems, when viewed from this perspective, require that one look around at the social and human factors involved. The study of science itself as a piece of knowledge with its own peculiar methodology and history is also a type of humanistic education, for the basic methodologies of science are not assumed, and the discipline itself is examined as a whole, as an example of human endeavor to understand nature. In this sense the study is more a part of history or philosophy than science itself. Since there is in many places the belief that science and technology are more prestigious and deserve more resources than the humanities, an argument needs to be presented that the humanities, when properly taught, are also beneficial in preparing students for life in

the world in the near future, perhaps even more so than the merely scientific or technological education. Thus I will focus mainly on the traditional humanistic disciplines, intending to show that they are indeed relevant and necessary. Science could well be humanistic, and in this case the distinction between the arts and sciences is not that clear cut. Thus, the argument favoring the benefits of humanistic education also applies to the humanistic study and conduct of the sciences also.

Disciplines where language and interpretation play a prominent role are history, literature and philosophy. These three are well known to comprise the humanities.⁴ The role of language is important in these three disciplines because all three are primarily based on the study of texts and ideas, and not on the external world or on nature through observation and experimentation. Historians focus their attention on historical texts, and base their investigations and theories upon interpretation of such texts. Literary scholars study literary texts and aim at interpreting the texts in order to gain understanding and more refined appreciation of them. Likewise, philosophers study texts in order to investigate logical relationships and

⁴ The study of the fine arts, such as music, painting, etc. are also traditionally considered part of the humanities. But these artistic endeavors in themselves tend to be narrow, and the education focusing on these areas is overtly professional and technical. Thus artistic education is not a part of humanistic education as I propose here, unless it is aimed at educating artists to be aware of their environment and social contexts, and to be sensitive to problems of ideas. That is to say, they need to be equipped with the same set of skills fostered by humanistic education.

discover answers for philosophical questions based on the texts, both historical and contemporary. Thus the activities of reading, writing, speaking—all related to language skills as well as presentation and the analysis of ideas—are crucial for these disciplines. These skills are also crucial for students who, though they might perhaps not become professionals in any of the humanistic disciplines, nonetheless will benefit from them if they are properly educated; that is, if they are led to see and appreciate what the real nature of the humanities is and not led to mere memorization.

Humanistic education is necessary for equipping human beings for the future because it is healthily skeptical. The aim is that the properly educated do not accept a claim to knowledge solely on authority, or on success in bringing about material progress, but centers around questioning and a critical attitude toward all claims to knowledge, with the purpose of finding a justification of belief which is based on thorough reasoning and dialogs. Since language and meaning are indeterminate and dependent upon human relations among one another and social practice, humanistic education, which is constituted on such concepts, is also based upon indeterminacy. However, far from the traditional distrust of indeterminacy, the presupposition of indeterminacy is, as I will try to show, of tremendous instrumental value in equipping the younger generation for the future in the next century.

The emphasis on language, meaning and interpretation does not translate to the abandonment of scientific and techno-

logical education, but is opposed to the narrow and overly technical education which has received a larger share of resources and attention from society than others. Indeed the study of the sciences and engineering could well benefit from humanistic education, for the latter inculcates a critical attitude which might contradict the basic assumption of the sciences, but on closer inspection reveals itself to be beneficial in the long run. The nature of scientific study, however, is such that it is by itself not humanistic, for it is not based on texts and their interpretation, but on systematic observation and mathematization. However, the benefits to students in scientific fields are many, for curricula which provide scientific and technical students with a proper amount of humanistic education will enable them to look at things from a wider perspective and to see things as shades of grey, instead of digital zero or one, or black and white. They will also benefit from the skills which only humanistic education can provide. Nevertheless, an inordinate amount of resource allocation in universities and society at large seems to favor narrow technical education, without taking a serious look at the role that the humanities disciplines could play in producing technicians capable of critically thinking and forming visions.

The reason for this is not difficult to see. Within the modernist system of faith in progress, technical education is seen as the most expedient means by which progress is obtained. It is geared specifically to this purpose. Humanistic education, on the other hand, is superficially opposed to vocationalism, for its aim is not to prepare students just for an immediate environment, but to instil critical attitude. However,

there is a paradox with regards to humanistic and technical education. Technical education, which emphasizes certain sets of narrow, 'employable' skills, is in fact not the best means to prepare the students of tomorrow. On the other hand, humanistic education, which de-emphasizes vocational training, could in fact be instrumental in preparing students for vocations of the future. Thus the best vocational training seems to be an education which deliberately de-emphasizes just such training. In the rest of this essay I will offer an explanation why this is so. My proposal is that there are four major types of skills which provided by humanistic education enable students to cope with the future successfully. These are: communication, critical thinking, visualization and adaptability skills. These skills are all related, and they are some of the most useful tools they will ever need for surviving successfully amidst uncertainties.

Communication skills are becoming increasingly necessary for students who will enter the work force in the future. These skills are not merely knowing how to write a letter or a memo, or to summarize minutes of meetings. On the contrary, communication skills are directly related to ideas and their presentation in a clear and precise manner so that full understanding is achieved. Their importance in the world cannot be over-emphasized. In a world where an immense amount of information is propagated and consumed, the ability to communicate effectively is highly desirable, for it enables one to 'get the message through' with minimum distortion. A consequence is that the information one is going to transmit is more 'visible' and accessible. Information itself is nothing but clear and meaningful sentences. Thus if the

sentences themselves are not communicated clearly and precisely, then the information itself, or at least a part of it, gets lost in the process. There is in fact no distinction between the message itself and the language used to convey it; the message and the sentence in which it is embedded are one and the same. The traditional idea that language serves only to house or to embed the meaning, or that language and thought are separable and distinct, only underscores the belief that the need to be precise and clear is somehow dispensable or superfluous because the message will get through anyway provided that other means of clarifying the meaning, such as contexts, are available. However, context itself is not sufficient in identifying meaning, as the same context can provide the basis for different understandings and interpretations for different people, especially if they are from different backgrounds (as is often the case in intercultural communication). Since complete thought is nothing but language 'uttered' quietly by someone, language and thought are indeed inseparable, and clear thought is thus only possible through clear language. Therefore, a program of education that emphasizes clarity in either serves to provide the populace with a useful means of coping with the changing world of today and tomorrow. If success in communication serves any useful purpose at all, then humanistic education is indispensable. For, as I have said, humanistic education is constituted by the use of language and interpretation, and communication is possible only through meaningful language.

Here is an advantage of humanistic education over the technical or scientific. Since the former centers on language, in the sense that language and meaning are both

the subject of study and the medium by which anything is studied, the practice of communication skills is crucial. Technical education, on the other hand, is aimed at inculcating a certain set of skills for which language and communication are not that important. This is made amply clear in such disciplines as engineering or computer science, where the need for using natural language seldom goes beyond what is technically required in order that points in the respective subject matter be put across. Even in such disciplines as the sciences, which also aim at providing 'pure' knowledge untainted by vocational concerns, the need for successful communication also seldom goes beyond the jargons specific to these disciplines themselves. Scientists communicate, qua scientists, only to other scientists, and the whole algorithm of their language use is restricted so that points and ideas in their respective disciplines can be conveyed in the clearest possible manner. Scientific discourses, and technical ones for that matter, are bound by prescribed sets of rules which define the subject matter as well as minimizing confusion. Ideas are communicated by following these rules, and so new ideas are already bound and shaped by the methodologies and assumptions of these disciplines, hence they are new only in the sense that the ideas satisfy the requirement of newness in those disciplines which is set down in advance. In short, scientific and technical communication is a prescribed act, and is thus easy to follow and not easily prone to mistakes. Successful communication is thus ensured. But since the success here is meaningful only in the limited context of already prescribed rules and assumptions, the role of this type of education for providing the populace with

the tools necessary to thrive in the world of today and tomorrow is limited.

Humanistic education fares better in this regard. The humanistic disciplines are not as rigidly bound by rigorous methodologies or sets of assumptions as are the scientific and technical disciplines, so they are much more flexible in their operation. Scholars in philosophy, history or literature disagree strongly about the proper method of their disciplines. The disagreement, however, is a source of strength. The lack of total agreement on method leads to an open arena where humanistic disciplines can be conducted freely, with the spirit of questioning everything including one's own assumptions. The benefit for communication skill is quite apparent. Scientific or technical communication is bound by rules which cannot be broken if the discipline itself is to remain intact, but the open ended nature of the humanistic disciplines results in more freedom in communication, bound only by rationality or at least by rules which are not as rigid as those of scientific and technical disciplines. Humanistic disciplines are by nature more accessible to laymen than are the technical and scientific ones. Certainly jargon and technical terms abound in every discipline, but since the subject matter of the humanities deal directly with human concerns, their language is less prone to ritualization by canonical rules. A consequence is that students well versed in the humanities are naturally well versed in expressing their thoughts and opinions. The subject matter in which they are well versed is the general concerns one finds in everyday life. Since one's life is not limited only to the technical interest of one's profession or occupation, one needs to be able to communicate effectively outside

one's own sphere of expertise.

Other important skills best fostered by humanistic education are critical thinking skills. That these are very important skills is not much disputed, for the ability to sift through the mass of information which has exploded exponentially in recent years is of tremendous importance in the world of today and the future. Critical thinking is the skill of being able to judge for oneself which information is valuable for one's purpose and which is not. This skill is widely characterized as the ability to suspend one's belief until proper evidence is available. It is especially important in a democratic society where the citizen is asked to participate in the governing of his or her own community or state—a task which requires a very high degree of critical thinking ability to discern truth and untruth, to be able to distinguish appearance and reality with the resources available. The world today is rapidly becoming democratic. It is clear that the trend toward democracy is going to persist for some time into the future. A proper amount of critical thinking ability, then, should be included in the curriculum so that our young can survive and prosper in a world beset by these political changes. What makes changing politics relevant at this point is that it offers a clear context in which the necessity of critical thinking is visible. But the changing environment the student will face in the future does not include only politics. Critical thinking ability is in fact useful in any context where the need to resist persuasion merely by irrational means is present, and in a world flooded by ever increasing amounts of information, the need for this type of skill is more urgent in order that one is able to keep oneself afloat amidst the information deluge.

Since humanistic education focuses on language and interpretation, it is one of the best ways toward building up critical thinking skills. The sciences, too, are capable of fostering these skills, for their purpose is to search for knowledge according to commonly accepted methods. Thus, a piece of information which does not conform to these scientific methods is criticized and judged to be unjustified. However, since the scientific method is operable only within a clearly defined and specific domain, it proves to be quite useless in domains other than scientific ones, such as the realm of values. Here, students are forced to ask such questions as what their goals and purposes are in living, and why these goals are important for them. These distinctively human concerns are the province of the humanities, and are the staple issues of literature and philosophy. Such questionings help the students to be critical of all assumptions and beliefs which hitherto they might have taken for granted. A good humanistic education fosters the ability to criticize and to provide rational support for these criticisms.

This does not mean, however, that students are encouraged to become iconoclastic, to be destroyers of every belief in sight, or to become total skeptics. On the contrary, it enables the students not to accept anything solely because of external pressure or outward appearances. The students accept nothing without being able to provide justifications for their acceptance. This ability is what I call 'healthy skepticism.' A healthy skeptic is not one who does not believe in anything, or who is out to destroy all foundations of belief, but is one who does not believe in any piece of information without an adequate

investigation of the justification of that information. Students are urged to ask questions, and to appreciate the fact that often there are no pre-determined answers to most of their questions. They have to provide their own questions and answers in many cases, especially those concerning such deep issues as the values and goals of life. In a world where information has become everything, critical thinking ability is crucial for students to prepare themselves well for such a world. The habit of thorough questioning, leaving nothing unexamined, will help them considerably after they finish school. They will be able to think and to be independent.

These qualities are beginning to be appreciated by employers who see the importance of flexibility and horizontal organization in business operations. In a world where competition is intense, to leave decisions only to the top level is not adequate, and each part of the organization needs to participate and make decision on its own without waiting for approval from above. This is an aspect of the so-called 're-engineering' process, which has become very popular in business circles. Here it is apparent that critical thinking skills are necessary for this new kind of organization management. As business firms become more flexible, and their structures change toward more leveling, spreading out horizontally, the need for participants in this type of organization who can think critically is evident. This is an area where the importance of humanistic education for the practical world of business is clearly visible.

The third skill best fostered by humanistic education is visualization. This is the skill

one has when one is able to form visions and to use one's imaginative capacity, in order to find fresh solutions to problems or to create new and original things or ideas. That this skill has become highly relevant, and will definitely continue to be so, is evident from the highly volatile and flexible nature of the world today and tomorrow. When few things are fixed and permanent, and change is a way of life, the ability to find new directions and be original is desirable, for it does not perpetually restrict men to play the role of victims of change, but allow them to be originators. In my country, Thailand, there has been much talk about the desired qualities of the leader of the government, prominent among which is the ability to form visions of the desired condition the country should be in. Past leaders delegated this task to a group of bureaucratic experts who employed their own vision which later was translated into a national development plan. This practice is contrary to democratic principles, for it ignores the voice of the people in steering the country. Leaders, especially democratic ones, deserve censure and criticism when they let the bureaucrats dictate policy direction. The demand for democratic leaders to have vision is thus a reaction against the entrenched bureaucrats and a call for greater participation by the people in government. Visualization skills are thus important because the people need collectively to chart the direction of the country, and to be able to do this they need to be able to see things that might not be there at the moment.

Thus, in a democratic society, visualization skills should not be limited only to a few leaders and their advisers, but are the responsibility of the entire populace. However, visualization can also be applied

to other areas of life. The skills are also important in the work place, for in the organization of the future, where decision making will be more and more delegated to each member of the team, the ability to visualize enables one to be independent from those at the top. To visualize is, in short, to create more information. In a world characterized by massive amounts of information, to create new information might sound superfluous, but to live in a world of information does not imply that one receives all the information which is already there. In such a world, new information has to be created to ensure understanding and to present new directions for humans who are thrust into the open space. Without visualization skills, humans in the open space will either get lost, or have to make do by following an established path set by others. Either way, it does not seem possible that those humans will thrive in such a world.

The humanistic disciplines, if properly taught, serve to instill these skills in the students well. Literature prides itself with inculcating imaginative and sensitive capabilities in students, and it does so by exposing them to the enjoyment and the richness of literary texts. A good teacher of literature conveys his or her own love and enjoyment of what he or she is reading with the students, and since students mostly have an affinity toward beauty, they naturally absorb literature joyfully. This is one the most important and memorable aspects of their education. A literary work invites the reader to explore his or her own imaginative terrain, to indulge himself or herself in the fictive world created by the reading. In short, the reader is invited to exercise his or her own visualization skills. The study of literature as a means toward

better understanding of the world is much neglected because of the belief that literature should be confined to the purely 'aesthetic' realm with no relation to the serious issues of the world. This belief is totally false. Serious literature addresses itself to issues such as politics and the nature of being human. Literature is more effective than other types of text in addressing these questions and provoking the reader to think about these issues for themselves. It deals with particular situations and individuals, as well as their inner thoughts and feelings. The fictive nature of literature also serves to enhance students' imaginative and visualization capacity; imagining that oneself is in the fictive world is a good exercise in visualization.

Education that does not place adequate emphasis on the role of visualization and imagination in the students' development merely impoverishes them and does not render the best tool for them to survive and thrive in the future world. A human being is not merely a creature of reason and observation. He is in addition a creative and imaginative being. Thus narrow technical education is not enough, for students need to have the chance to explore their own imaginative terrain, to be 'let loose,' so to speak, so that they become whole. In a typically narrow curriculum, this role of letting loose is not the function of the courses of instruction at all, but that of the students' own social relations and extracurricular activities. While these activities are certainly desirable and very important, they cannot be substitutes for the actual education provided by able teachers who are capable of honing the skills of imagination and visualization in the⁴ students in a serious and profound manner. Extracurricular activities tend to

be shallow, and if the students in these narrow curricula do not have chances to read serious and thoughtful literature, it is very likely they will not be given any chances outside the curricula. Such curricula, then, are not the best we can give our students; they are clearly not the best preparation for them to excel and flourish in the world of the future.

The other humanistic disciplines also promote visualization skills, though in a less visible manner. Examples of history are often cited as an aid in decision making in the present. Being immersed in historical contexts and events helps one form one's own vision regarding the historical matter involved. It aids one in finding alternatives for the present situation and context, enabling one to understand and find solutions to contemporary problems in such a way that is different from merely trying to approach them empirically through observing the immediate circumstances. The role of philosophy is less clear, but the philosophic quest for answers to difficult global questions certainly is relevant. In trying to understand such problems, philosophers employ the technique of visualizing possible scenarios in order to find ways to tackle the problems from various perspectives. In philosophy, examples play an important role in illustrating the abstract nature of philosophical thinking. Searching for compelling examples and trying to understand through them is surely what the study of philosophy can do to instill the skill of visualization in the students.

The fourth skill that inhabitants of the future world should possess is adaptability. This is the ability not to remain fixed in one's attitudes, beliefs, or capabilities, but to

change and to acquire new capabilities and skills easily. This is an ability to learn new things and generally to find ways to cope with changes and uncertainties with equanimity.

Being able to deal with the uncertainties and unpredictabilities that prevail in the future require that one be able to adapt one self to particular circumstances. It does not help in this world for one to hold on to fixed rules and canons telling one what one should do in all circumstances. Even principles themselves are subject to change, and one must be able to appreciate the unique value of particular situations before one is able to find the best way to solve the problem or to chart new strategies. To be adaptable means to appreciate change and to welcome it, thriving on it. To be able to do so, one has to realize that there is no readily available solution to every problem, that each problem is somehow unique and peculiar to particular circumstances, and that change is inevitable and natural. In a rapidly changing world, adaptability skills become crucial. Students should not remain static, capable only of doing things that were taught in school. One of the very best things we can offer our students is to teach them how to learn. This does not merely mean that students should know how to go to libraries to find information, but also means that they should appreciate the value of knowledge, and are able to think on their own. In order to be wholly free, it is necessary that one is adaptable, capable of responding positively to emerging forces from outside. Thrust into the open space with loosening ties with the past and traditions, humans need to be adaptable. For if they remain bound by traditions, then it will be difficult for them to deal

successfully with the ultra-modern world of the future.

The importance of adaptability skills is best shown by observing those who lack them. Religious fundamentalists are prime examples of those who show a lack of adaptability, and they are notoriously intolerant of anything which deviates from their own belief, as if theirs is the only rational and valid ways of living. Since it is clear that the world of the future will have no room for fundamentalists (for their tenets run so starkly against the grain of beliefs in freedom and openness), these fanatics clearly cannot succeed there. This example shows clearly the danger of being fixated on one's own belief system. The task of educators, then, when they prepare students for the next millennium, is to ensure that the students can adapt themselves and learn new knowledge and skills which will emerge and become necessary in the future.

The humanities' lack of commonly accepted methodology and its penchant to paint everything in shades of grey are very useful in honing this skill in students. This may sound paradoxical at first, but in fact it is not. To believe firmly and strongly in the truth of one's own belief system is not the best way to hone the skill, for when one is convinced, it is not likely to change. Since the humanities are premised on the idea that no belief, no interpretation, is immune from revision and that each belief thought to be true might turn out to be otherwise, properly taught students will come to see that unreviseable beliefs are very rare indeed. A consequence is that students of the humanities tend to appreciate change and uncertainty, and are less frightened by them.

However, the usual way of teaching, including that of the science subjects, (though most of the arts subjects are usually taught in the same way too) tends to ignore this important point, at least as practiced in a country like Thailand. The sciences are usually taught mechanistically, aiming at training students to be professionals in the field rather than at providing them with a comprehensive view of nature and its relation to humans. Chief among the assumptions lying behind such techniques is the belief that science captures all the truths there are, or at least the really important ones. Scientific doctrines are presented as if they are the final version; their historical development and stories about rejections of past theories are ignored or merely treated as past mistakes. Only the current doctrines are considered true. This way of teaching is hardly successful in making students adaptable enough to combat changes in the future. If only the mechanics are studied and the parts needed for understanding are neglected, the students may become mechanical also, thereby losing their sense of adaptability. The consequences for such students could be grave. Hence, for scientific education to have its share in preparing the young for the future, it must abandon the practice of assuming that only the current theories are unquestionably true. It must try to view the sciences as one aspect among the many human endeavors which should be known.

It might be objected that these four skills lay emphasis only on individuals. They are designed for the success of an individual rather than that of the society to which that individual belongs. Is there a sense in which these skills could contribute to the well being of the society or the community as a whole? If one realizes that a

community is nothing more than a collection of individuals, then the answer should be quite clear, for the success of individuals in the community will automatically translate to that of the community as a whole. Take Thailand for an example. If the Thai population have enough of these skills, the prospects for the country as a whole succeeding in the world arena will be much greater.

Then how about the moral dimension? Is there any sense in which someone equipped adequately with these four skills would be a more competent person morally? To argue this point in any substantive detail would require, among other things, that there obtains a relation between one's knowledge as well as one's cognitive and imagining skills on the one hand, and one's moral character on the other. That is a very large topic and hence cannot be dealt with in any detail in this paper. However, it is at least conceivable that, if the Socratic tenet that one cannot commit an immoral act if one knows that the act is immoral is correct, then possessing these skills, which are closely related to having knowledge, could lead the individual possessing them to become morally a more competent being.

Conclusion

The list of skills above show that humanistic education still has something to offer in the world of today and tomorrow, in which information is a commodity fetching a high price. Each of the four skills outlined above is related; all of them pertain in a significant way to the manipulation of information. The charge that the humanities are irrelevant to the contemporary or future world is, then, totally unfounded. In fact the humanities

can indeed contribute greatly to the success of individuals, provided they are properly taught. Therefore, in order that humanistic education and the inculcation of these skills be realizable at all, good and effective teaching is required. The teacher needs to be a humanist himself. That is to say, he or she must genuinely love the subject, and be able to communicate the sheer joy of learning he or she has to the students. The process is similar to using one torch to light many other torches so that everywhere is ablaze with light. The teacher can only inspire, and learning really occurs when students embark on their own journey toward understanding themselves and their surroundings. To repeat Socrates, the teacher can only be a midwife whose task is to bring forth what is already there in the students. The greatest joy of a teacher is to see students grow up intellectually and emotionally to be independent, sensitive and imaginative thinkers and doers. No other treasure could compare to this joy when the teacher sees that this job has been well done.⁵

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