DYNAMIC SCHOLARSHIP

Presidential Address
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Scholarship usually implies a proficiency or adeptness in school learning. It refers to the character or qualities of a scholar. Dynamic scholarship means a powerful, active, forceful, living type of learning that characterizes the scholar, particularly in his professional field and in teaching generally. For while a discussion of a research problem in a specialized area might be of interest to a few here today, teaching involves many, if not all, of us, whether we are aware of it or not. Particularly is the shortage of teachers, especially in the natural sciences in the high schools, being emphasized and viewed with alarm by many, but the disrepute that the teaching profession has fallen into in this area outranks the shortage in seriousness because the latter contributes to the shortage. The main theme of this talk is this: a teacher with a dynamic type of scholarship can contribute a great deal to the solution of these problems.

Numerous are the articles and books that describe the preparation and training of a teacher. But certainly knowledge of the materials to be taught is basic in the teaching process. When enthusiasm for knowledge comes from exciting experiences in an area of intellectual activity, a clear, orderly presentation is usually a corollary. This is not to minimize the other traits usually associated with good teaching such as the character and personality of the teacher, his sense of humor, his techniques, his patience, inspiration, and by no means the least—the quality that makes him a "natural" in the profession.

Good teaching is a personal performance of imaginative creativeness. As the director of a symphony orchestra creates a performance from the notes, instruments, and performers at his command, so should the teacher make alive through creative means the subject matter that he teaches. Thorough preparation and proper enthusiasm enable the teacher to establish the principles of the course from which the relevance of the details can be determined. His class time possesses life as well as length, his presentation involves an integrated and coherent view, usually, but not always, separate from the text, and the learning process is an active one through purposeful, thought-provoking assignments as well as inspiration. Such teachers are bound to be remembered in the later years of the student's life because such a teacher started a career in the right direction with an attitude that fostered future study.

Why then are so many teachers lost in the gloom of uninspired teaching, and why has the teaching profession, especially in the secondary schools, lost prestige? The financial aspect can be met only by adjusting the salaries with respect to the services given. Teachers like others need the benefits of hospital and life insurance, tenure, salary schedules, promotion plans,

and the other economic programs that provide for his physical well-being. But the social power, prestige, commendation, appreciation, recognition, and other non-material rewards of the profession will have to come by destroying the dry rot of the profession with the resulting restoration of the original social and psychological factors that once rated the teaching profession with medicine, law, and the ministry.

The large enrollments of students with the resulting large classes in the schools changed the general philosophy of education from the education of the select few as scholars to the growth and development of the individual as a person and a member of society. This was good, for learning became more than memorization of facts, often without comprehension, and centered to a greater extent on personality adaptation such as attitudes of understanding, of appreciations, and of special abilities. In the process, however, the very thing necessary to achieve these objectives was neglected to the extent that the teacher had nothing really important to teach. This unavoidable trend toward mediocrity has made it possible for the teacher of the past thirty years to observe a gradual lowering of the academic standards within the subject fields, sometimes to the level of the least intelligent pupil. This has resulted in the neglect of the superior student—a much regretted fact. Similarily, the emphasis on extra-curricular activities has swung to the extreme where they have at times appeared more important than the curricular activities. And among the most troublesome of all is the realization that some teachers are disciplinarians more than they are teachers. This emphasizes another change in the social structure against which all the subject matter enthusiasm in the world would be of little avail. Such an atmosphere has discouraged many persons from ever considering teaching and has resulted in anything but a preparation for the serious intellectual tasks that the high school student will face in later years.

This state of affairs has brought into conflict two groups involved in the preparation of teachers. The subject matter specialists accuses the professional educator of neglecting subject matter, of discrediting thinking, of unrelated, fragmentary experiments with little or no factual evidence, of reliance on educational slogans, and of unethical maneuvering for political power. The professional educator states that the scholar disregards personality developement, is ignorant of the problems in the educational field, thinks there is no scholarship but that of his own, desires to dominate education for the select few, and in general, uses the schoolman as a scapegoat.

Definitions of terms, self-criticism, and free discussion leading to compromise and mutual understanding must come between these two groups. Since it will require considerable time for this to take place, so will it take time to restore the teaching profession in this area to its rightful position. The question is not whether the high schools are poorer or better than they were years ago, but how can we make them better than they are now. A unified front between these two groups will help a great deal.

One solution to the inadequate supply of teachers is in the restoration of the teacher to his rightful position. Teaching, not administration, is the highest function of a school. If the teacher can regain or sense the attitude generated by a dynamic scholarship and combine it with the best of the professional educational practices, the teaching profession is on the road to a new era. For a love for teaching will be engendered that will result in an active instead of a passive teaching. If the gifted student is properly trained and not neglected, another great objective will be gained.

Through its own efforts, the teaching profession can gain in spirit, and prestige will follow. The acquisition of the latest knowledge, the newer techniques, and the current concepts in a subject by means of formal schooling, conferences, sabbatical leaves, intensive reading, discussions with productive scientists, or active research will do much to restore the profession. The very effort of achievement will build individual teaching morale and a professional spirit. Perhaps a designation of "teacher specialist" or "master teacher" is worth investigating in this era of specialization. Likewise, the new teacher must enter his profession with the "spark" of the perennial student. This statement has many implications for the college or university teacher. It also means that a chemistry teacher should teach chemistry or closely allied subjects and not a subject outside his field. Techniques of teaching and learning, important as they may be, are only a part of the process for disciplining the mind, a process in which worthy subject matter plays no small part.

The idea of a dynamic scholarship is only one of many factors. It may not help clear the confusion between a lesson memorized and a lesson mastered, or an unrelated encylopedic knowledge and an accurately thinking mind; it may not emphasize the moral responsibilities or opportunities of a teacher; it probably won't mean much to those who just put in their time or are plain lazy; it won't substitute for good character, a balanced personality, true humility, or good common sense; and it probably won't substitute for the civic duties or just plain friendliness of the teacher. But it is still a powerful factor that will help greatly to enable the teaching profession to regain its prestige. Once this has happened, students will be attracted again to a profession that has much to offer.

At the college or university level there is no excuse for the "incompetent, deadly dull, pedantic, inaudible, illegible" professor. Here a dynamic scholarship is a necessity if it consists of nothing more than keeping abreast by following research through the professional journals. But better yet is the research program itself, which is often more possible at this level. Students soon sense this research attitude and catch the spirit of the living science as they come in contact with several professors so imbued. Suddenly they realize that college courses are more than a "deadly monotony of memorization without intellectual stimulation," as one great teacher states it. And again, "the search for something new to tell and the telling are closely related."

This dynamic scholarship is a way of thinking, an attitude, that makes every class an exciting adventure for the teacher and the learning process a happy one for the student. However, it is more than research, even though the research scientists has the same or similar characteristics. While the achievements of the research man are gauged by his superior research and not by his inferior teaching, so the teacher is measured by his superior teaching and not by his inferior research. The good teacher or the good research man remembers his primary obligation and does not confuse objectives. Again this dynamic scholarship is not the whole solution to poor teaching but an important part of the good teaching. Best of all, it provides a training atmosphere and a compelling desire to know for the pure fun of knowing. It adds depth and solidarity to the scholar's scholarship, and it will increase his erudition, at least in depth, and his versatility in general. An intellect that catches fire and burns with a lifelong desire to be competent in an area of knowledge is bound to be stimulating to students. This is especially true if the teacher can combine the best of the educational principles and techniques of teaching with his love of subject matter, for then he will teach the individual as well as the subject matter.

In conclusion, I would say that intellectual curiosity concerning any fundamental discipline is a very valuable trait. As one scientist stated it, "Never lose a holy curiosity." Can we endow our students or research assistants with this way of learning? Each one of us as scientist, either personally or through the Academy, owes to the generations of students in school or out in the elementary, secondary, or higher education, the fostering of this inquiring spirit for the unknowns of today. One can help do this by possessing a dynamic scholarship for his own area of learning in particular, and for all areas in general, for then will he always be willing to learn and happy to share his learning with others.