Book Reviews

Universitas: The Social Restructuring of American Undergraduate Education, by Thomas E. Boudreau. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998. 232 pp. $55.00

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Universitas, Thomas Boudreau tells us, is a book written "for students and parents who often arrive at the university campus with very different expectations from the presiding administrators and educators" (p. 1). Its overall purpose, however, is to persuade university administrators and faculty to restructure postsecondary institutions in ways that promote what Boudreau terms the "3 I's,": interdisciplinarity, intersubjectivity, and interculturalism. At present, many universities are characterized by "hyperspecialized" departments and faculty isolated from one another, their students, and the larger world in which they live. The result is a disjointed undergraduate curriculum that ill-prepares students to live and work in a global society. *Universitas* (Latin for "to make one") argues for structural reintegration of disciplines and cultures within the university in order to better serve undergraduates. There is good reason to think, however, that such structural transformation would also benefit graduate students, staff, and faculty.

The book's three parts reflect separate stages of Boudreau's argument. Part I lays the philosophical foundation for Boudreau's critique of American higher education and his recommendations for change. Chapter 1 employs Plato's allegory of the cave to critique the contemporary university as a place where "students are literally chained to four years of a 'shadow play of discourse' in which they review parading puppets in a wide variety of unconnected courses" (p. 31). Boudreau argues for a return to a Socratic pedagogy that would enable students to discern "*relationships* and *interconnections* between various levels of analysis and . . . between different disciplines" (pp. 15–16), promoting what is described in Chapter 2 as a "languaged life of learning." Referring to Martin Buber's (1970) distinction between "I-Thou" and "I-It" relationships, Boudreau urges caring, cooperative, and respectful encounter between and among students and faculty engaged in ongoing dialogue concerning questions of human knowledge and existence. Although Plato (1961) is a predictable starting place for discussions of the philosophy of education, Boudreau's use of *The Republic* to argue specifically for the importance of interdisciplinarity is persuasive. His discussion of Anne Patrick's (1990) work on replacing metaphors of territoriality with metaphors of conversation in Chapter 2 further builds his argument for interdisciplinarity and connects it effectively with his argument for intersubjectivity. Those accustomed to thinking territorially will erect boundaries between themselves and (objectified) "others"; shifting to a model of conversation illuminates the other not only as subject, but as a necessary participant in our own learning.

In Chapter 3, "The Great Debate," Boudreau distinguishes his critique of higher education from other contemporary critiques. Boudreau's focus on *how* students learn, rather than on simply *what* they learn, does differentiate him from other advocates of university reform, such as William Bennett and Allan Bloom, who blithely advocate a return to basics in the form of an established canon of "Great (western) Books." So too does Boudreau's explicit defense of multicultural education in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, these latter chapters of Part I are trite. Debating opposing sides of philosophical questions in a university classroom is hardly a new idea; nor is it clear that deliberately staging conflict in the classroom, as Boudreau suggests, is conducive to the aims of intersubjective, cooperative learning. As Moulton (1996) argues, adversarial paradigms frequently silence others rather than drawing them into conversation. Chapter 4's argument that "western culture" is a misnomer insofar as it denotes only the northwest portion of the globe is likewise simplistic. Faculty and institutional leaders seeking a more substantive philosophical grounding for intercultural education would be better served by reading Ann Diller (1993) or Henry Giroux (1988).

Part II of *Universitas* is the strongest part of the book; it provides several specific suggestions and models for restructuring universities to enrich undergraduate education. Chapter 5 argues against overschooling, overspecializing, and overstressing students, suggesting that (1) students be encouraged to perform a year's community service prior to entering university; (2) traditional majors be replaced with broad-based interdisciplinary majors; and (3) four-year degrees be replaced with three-year degrees. Discussion of programs at Hampshire College and the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University provide substance to Boudreau's recommendations concerning interdisciplinarity, as well as providing useful examples of intersubjectivity by their respective emphases on advisor-student relationships and community service. The recommendation for three-year degrees is developed in Chapter 6, where Boudreau argues for a curricular framework that mirrors students' intellectual development as described by Alfred North Whitehead (1929). Whitehead's three stages of learning—the romantic, specialized, and generalized stages—are to be mirrored in a first-year program of comprehensive, multidisciplinary study that nurtures student imagination, a second year in which students acquire precision within a selected interdisciplinary concentration, and a final year wherein students explore connections between their specialties and the wider world. There is much food for thought in this chapter, although Boudreau's claim that diverse students may have different learning styles seems in tension with a curriculum modeled on a singular pattern of intellectual development. For example, educators at metropolitan institutions serving nontraditional students will note that Boudreau's model curriculum (as well as his recommendation for community service prior to entering university) assumes a youthful student body.

Chapter 7 focuses on interculturalism as a practical educational imperative. As Boudreau suggests, we cannot prepare students to live in an increasingly global society without exposing them to other world views and teaching them to appreciate the international contexts of business, technology, and the arts. A primary strength of this chapter is the variety of strategies offered for internationalizing the faculty, the curriculum, and the student body. These are given life by discussion of Donald Watt's 1930s Experiment in International Living, as well as discussion of Radford University's proposed New College of Global

Studies, Drury College's Global Perspectives curriculum, and Syracuse University's Global Collaboratory. Chapter 8 attends to ways that campuses can foster local community, concentrating on connections between classroom learning and campus life. Specific suggestions offered here include: revising systems of evaluation to reflect diverse learning styles; requiring sexual assault and violence workshops at first year orientations; providing campus daycare as part of the education curriculum; integrating elderhostel courses into the undergraduate curriculum; and requiring ecological and agricultural activities as part of natural science programs. Some of these suggestions have been made elsewhere; yet, they bear repeating, as they are too seldom implemented.

Part III of *Universitas* focuses on the importance of administrative leadership in fostering a unique vision for an institution and ensuring that this vision informs the core curriculum, pedagogical practices, hiring and promotion practices, salary distribution, and the award of tenure. As Boudreau claims in Chapter 9, "the social restructuring of undergraduate learning may bring some painful choices as academic chairs and departments lose some of their current power and resources to deans who must ensure the interdisciplinary, intercultural, and intersubjective quality of their respective colleges as a whole" (p. 179). A more radical restructuring than Boudreau countenances might challenge college boundaries as well. In either case, however, it will be imperative that university presidents, provosts, and chancellors articulate clearly a vision for their campus that earns the support of college deans, key faculty members, and student representatives, as well as alumni and trustees. Chapter 10 presents Thomas Jefferson, founder of the University of Virginia, and the Federalist League universities as the embodiments of such educational vision. Although not a focal point, the most controversial suggestion in Part III is the recommendation to abolish tenure in all but some cases. Already retiring faculty are rapidly being replaced by adjunct piece workers in efforts to contain costs. Certainly, one of the things that needs to be examined in restructuring the university to better meet student needs is precisely this trend—a trend likely to be hastened by the abolition of tenure.

In all, however, *Universitas* is a valuable resource for those concerned with the quality of undergraduate education. As we approach the millenium, we must, as Boudreau suggests, empower students to "learn how to learn" if they are to thrive in a rapidly transforming and global environment. This will require, at a minimum, exposing them to the ideas and values of multiple disciplines and multiple cultures by means of a coherent pedagogy that enables them to see connections, as well as conflicts, between diverse perspectives. Although multiculturalism and interdisciplinarity are given lip service on many campuses, few have restructured in ways necessary to make this meaningful. Some models do exist however and a chief advantage of Boudreau's work is that he provides such concrete examples. Educators truly committed to these goals may nonetheless note a narrowness in the models he offers. From Plato's Academy to Jefferson's University, the exemplary philosophers and institutional leaders Bourdeau commends are almost exclusively white men, and the model institutions he discusses are exclusively U.S. institutions. In a book explicitly committed to fostering intersubjectivity, interdisciplinarity, and interculturalism in the academy, one expects to encounter noted international philosophers of education such as Paulo Friere (1970), or educational models drawn from countries

where community, rather than individualism, is a core value. One also hopes to encounter national institutional founders and visionaries such as Mary McLeod Bethune or other leaders of historically Black colleges and women's colleges. It is also surprising that the interdisciplinary programs discussed in *Universitas* do not include women's studies and ethnic studies programs, given their emphases on intersubjectivity and their influential impact on institutional curricula and pedagogy in past decades. These concerns aside, however, *Universitas* is an excellent resource for rethinking and transforming undergraduate education. Indeed, the book's limitations largely underline the great need for the transformations it recommends.

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Scaling the Ivory Tower: Merit & Its Limits in Academic Careers,
by Lionel S. Lewis. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers,
1975, 1998 (2nd ed.). 238 pp. Paper $24.95.

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Reading *Scaling the Ivory Tower: Merit & Its Limits in Academic Careers* is much like participating in an archeological dig or sorting through a collection of old family photos. It provides a revealing look at key values, concerns, and practices of the academic profession approximately thirty years ago. At the same time, it presents a milepost by which to measure higher education's progress since then.

The book's basic premise is simple and continues to ring true: "Many factors, beside merit, weigh heavily in who gets ahead in academe" (p. xi). The au-

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