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"ON HOW TO TELL WHEN SOMEONE IS SPEAKING ROT"

Installation Speech  
by  
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CHAIRMAN ROUSH, DR. DAY, MISS CEDARGREN, MEMBERS OF  
THE OTTERBEIN COMMUNITY, FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

THE LAST TIME A SIMILAR CEREMONY WAS CONDUCTED AT  
OTTERBEIN WAS ON OCTOBER 28, 1971 WHEN THOMAS J. KERR, IV  
WAS INSTALLED AS THE 18TH PRESIDENT. IT WAS 12½ YEARS PRIOR,  
ON APRIL 25, 1959 THAT LYNN W. TURNER WAS INAUGURATED AS THE  
17TH PRESIDENT.

WE ARE HONORED TODAY TO HAVE MRS. TURNER AND DR.  
AND MRS. KERR WITH US, AND I WOULD LIKE YOU TO JOIN ME IN  
EXPRESSING APPRECIATION TO THEM FOR THEIR YEARS OF DEDICATED  
SERVICE TO OTTERBEIN COLLEGE.

THE PURPOSE OF AN EVENT SUCH AS THIS IS CERTAINLY  
TO PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE A CHANGE IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT.  
MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE REPRESENTING THE VARIOUS PUBLICS OF THE COLLEGE TO COME TOGETHER  
TO CELEBRATE THE TRADITIONS AND PROUD HISTORY OF OTTERBEIN  
AND TO REAFFIRM OUR MUTUAL COMMITMENT TO QUALITY EDUCATION.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION TO A CIVILIZATION HAS  
BEEN AFFIRMED SINCE THE ANCIENTS. ARISTOTLE CLAIMED THAT  
THOSE WHO EXAMINE GOVERNMENTS KNOW HOW THE FATE OF EMPIRES

DEPENDS ON THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH. WHEN ASKED HOW MUCH AN EDUCATED MAN WAS SUPERIOR TO THE UNEDUCATED, THIS GREEK PHILOSOPHER REPLIED, "AS MUCH AS THE LIVING ARE TO THE DEAD."

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE, ABRAHAM LINCOLN ONCE SUGGESTED SEVERAL ATTRIBUTES AN EDUCATED PERSON SHOULD POSSESS. HE SAID THE BEAVER HAS EVERYTHING A PERSON NEEDS -- INTELLIGENCE, INGENUITY, A PEACEFUL NATURE, AND A GOOD SET OF TEETH.

SINCE THE FOUNDING OF HARVARD IN 1636 THE VISION OF AN EDUCATED PERSON WAS ONE THAT EMBRACED THE WHOLE OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE -- HISTORY, LITERATURE, LANGUAGES, MATHEMATICS, THE NATURAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS, AND PHILOSOPHY.

DURING THE LAST 20 YEARS WE HAVE WITNESSED A FRONTAL ASSAULT ON THE IDEAL OF A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION. THE FIRST ATTACK CAME UNDER THE BANNER OF RELEVANCE. WHOLESALE CURRICULUM CHANGES WERE INITIATED AND, ON SOME CAMPUSES, NEARLY A GENERATION OF STUDENTS WERE GRANTED BACCALAUREATE DEGREES WITHOUT A GLIMPSE OF THE LIBERATING MUCH LESS THE LIBERAL AWARENESS OF WHAT EDUCATION THEY HAD MISSED.

THE SECOND ATTACK CAME IN THE FORM OF PROFESSIONALISM BORN OF ANXIETY ABOUT EMPLOYMENT AND MARKETABLE SKILLS. IN SOME INSTITUTIONS CURRICULAR CONCESSIONS WERE MADE TO INSURE THAT

STUDENTS HAD SUFFICIENT FREEDOM AND FLEXIBILITY TO RECEIVE WHAT THEY THOUGHT THEY NEEDED RATHER THAN WHAT A COLLEGE SAW AS THE MARKS OF AN EDUCATED MIND.

OTTERBEIN COLLEGE HAS AVOIDED THOSE WIDE PENDULUM SWINGS AND HAS HELD TO ITS TRADITIONAL BELIEFS ASSURING STUDENTS A SUFFICIENT BLEND OF BREADTH AND DEPTH ACROSS THE PROGRAM OF STUDY, AN EFFECTIVE BLENDING OF THE OLD AND THE NEW, A COMMITMENT TO CONTINUITY AND CHANGE, A COMMITMENT TO VALUES AND EXCELLENCE.

OTTERBEIN HAS LEARNED TO LIVE COMFORTABLY WITH THESE CONCEPTS, RECOGNIZING THAT THEY FORM THE CORNERSTONES OF A VIBRANT, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.

IN UPHOLDING THIS IDEAL, OTTERBEIN IS POINTING TO SOMETHING CENTRAL WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION -- NAMELY, THAT THE SELF IS NOT THE END OF HUMAN EXISTENCE; THAT THE DESIRES OF THE SELF ARE NOT THE TOTALITY OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE; THAT TRANSCENDENCE OF SELF IS WHAT IS ULTIMATELY INVOLVED IN BECOMING TRULY HUMAN.

OUR GOAL SHOULD BE THAT AT YOUR GRADUATION YOU WILL BE ABLE TO SAY, "I UNDERSTAND WHAT I BELIEVE AND I KNOW HOW TO ACT ON MY BELIEFS."

TODAY, MANY DOOMSAYERS TALK OF SURVIVAL FOR THE INDEPENDENT, CHURCH-RELATED COLLEGE. BUT SURVIVAL IS THE WRONG CONCERN, IT IS THE PRIMITIVE CONCERN. HOW DO WE SERVE IS THE BETTER APPROACH. HOW DO WE MERGE FAITH, REASON, AND THE WORKPLACE FOR STUDENTS WHO WILL SPEND THE MAJORITY OF THEIR PRODUCTIVE LIVES IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS A NATION WE NEED A WAY OF ORDERING THE QUESTIONS THAT WE PUT TO LIFE. I FIND AMONG YOUR GENERATION OF STUDENTS A SYNTHESIS BETWEEN THE URGE TO MAKE A LIVING AND THE IMPERATIVE TO MAKE A LIFE. I SENSE THAT YOU DESIRE AN AWARENESS OF OTHERS AND AN EXPLORATION OF SELF.

AS OTTERBEIN STUDENTS YOU KNOW THAT IF YOU WANT TO BE HISTORY YOU NEED UNDERSTAND ONLY YOUR IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS. BUT IF YOU WANT TO MAKE HISTORY YOU HAVE TO WORK TO UNDERSTAND YOUR GREATER SURROUNDINGS, YOUR HERITAGE, YOUR CORE OF BELIEFS, THE GENERATIONS OF COMMITMENT PRECEDING YOU AT OTTERBEIN COLLEGE.

I BELIEVE WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING, AFTER A PERIOD OF CLASHING BETWEEN A TRADITIONAL VALUE SYSTEM AND THE CHALLENGE OF A NEW VALUE SYSTEM, IS THE SYNTHESIS OF THE TWO SYSTEMS MERGING WHAT IS HEALTHIEST AND MOST VALID IN EACH.

GRADUATION FROM OTTERBEIN DOES NOT CONFER A PASSPORT OF PROFESSIONALISM IN A NARROW AND CONFINING CAREER. RATHER, IT RITUALIZES THE COMMENCEMENT OF SELF-DIRECTED, LIFETIME LEARNING.

WHETHER YOU ARE AT THE BEGINNING, IN THE MIDDLE, OR NEARING THE END OF YOUR OTTERBEIN JOURNEY, LET ME SUGGEST SEVERAL PURPOSES OF A HIGHER EDUCATION, SPECIFICALLY AN OTTERBEIN EDUCATION.

CERTAINLY A PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS TO PREPARE YOU FOR A CAREER. THAT IS A MOST WORTHY PURPOSE, ONE SHARED BY GENERATIONS OF STUDENTS BEFORE YOU AND PRACTICALLY DEMONSTRATED BY THE PRODUCTIVE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF OTTERBEIN ALUMNI.

AT THE OTHER END IT MIGHT BE STATED THAT THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS TO TRANSMIT CIVILIZATION.

THE RENAISSANCE HUMANISTS ARGUED THAT THE IMPARTING OF KNOWLEDGE NEEDS NEITHER RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, OR POLITICAL JUSTIFICATION. ITS PURPOSE, TO THE EXTENT THAT IT HAS ONE, IS TO PASS ON FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION THE CORPUS OF KNOWLEDGE THAT CONSTITUTES CIVILIZATION.

IN SIMPLER TIMES THE CORPUS OF KNOWLEDGE WAS EASILY DEFINED. IT WAS ALL INCLUDED IN THE MEDIEVAL UNIVERSITIES QUADRIVIUM (INCLUDING ARITHMETIC, GEOMETRY, ASTRONOMY AND MUSIC) AND THE TRIVIUM (REFERRING TO GRAMMAR, RHETORIC AND LOGIC).

BUT WHAT OF TODAY. I WOULD SUGGEST SIX MORE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

(1) A PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS TO LEARN TO DEAL WITH ABSTRACTIONS OR COMPLEXITIES, TO FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH SUBLETIES OF THOUGHT OR LANGUAGE, TO THINK SEQUENTIALLY -- TO THINK.

(2) A PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS LIBERATION -- LIBERATION TO ACT WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR, OR REWARD, OR PUNISHMENT. A LIBERATING EDUCATION DEVELOPS A BROAD, CRITICAL AWARENESS, DEVELOPS ABILITIES TO APPLY WHAT ONE HAS LEARNED, AND IMPARTS A SENSE OF CONTROL OVER ONES LIFE.

(3) A PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS TO PROVIDE YOU WITH THE HABITUAL VISION OF GREATNESS, A VISION THAT COMES IN PART FROM THE LIVES AND EXAMPLES OF FACULTY, FROM THE LIVES AND EXAMPLES OF FELLOW STUDENTS, FROM THE BIOGRAPHIES OF THE GIANT MINDS AND SPIRITS OF PAST DAYS. AT THE VERY LEAST, EDUCATION CAN ASSERT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEANS AND ENDS AND VALUE EACH.

(4) A PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS TO TRAIN THE MIND TO THINK, REGARDLESS OF WHAT IT IS THINKING ABOUT. THIS PURPOSE SUGGESTS THAT IT IS NOT WHAT THE MIND KNOWS BUT HOW IT EVALUATES ANY NEW FACT OR ARGUMENT. TEACHING HOW TO THINK PERHAPS ATTACHES MORE IMPORTANCE TO THE PROCESS OF LEARNING THAN TO THE SUBSTANCE OF WHAT IS LEARNED, BUT IT DOES PROVIDE A WAY OF COPING WITH THE VAST INCREASE IN KNOWLEDGE.

(5) CERTAINLY A PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS TO TEACH MORALS, VALUES, ETHICS. TO CLAIM ETHICAL NEUTRALITY IS TO VIOLATE ONE OF OUR ESSENTIAL PURPOSES. A CHURCH-RELATED COLLEGE THAT REFUSES TO TAKE ETHICAL DILEMMAS SERIOUSLY IS VIOLATING ITS BASIC OBLIGATION TO SOCIETY.

MOST SOCIETAL CRISES ARE NOT OF TECHNICAL PROCEDURES, BUT OF BASIC PURPOSES. VALUE FORMATION SHOULD BE AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO AT OTTERBEIN. WE MUST TEACH THE MORAL USE OF KNOWLEDGE AS WE WORK TO DEVELOP A JUST AND HUMANE COMMUNITY.

AND HOW ARE THESE PURPOSES TRANSMITTED? CERTAINLY BY BOOKS AND FILMS AND EXPERIMENTS AND OBSERVATION. BUT THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT IN THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE IS A TEACHER WHO IS INTERESTED AND EXCITED ABOUT THE SUBJECT MATTER AND BRINGS THE STUDENT IN TO SHARE THAT EXCITEMENT.

A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OTTERBEIN AND SOME OTHER COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IS THE NEARLY UNIVERSAL

INTEREST OF FACULTY IN STUDENTS AS INDIVIDUALS. IN THE BRIEF TIME I HAVE BEEN ON CAMPUS, WHAT HAS STRUCK ME SO FORCIBLY IN TALKING WITH FACULTY IS THEIR TENDENCY TO TALK ABOUT THEIR STUDENTS RATHER THAN THEIR FIELDS OR THEIR RESEARCH. THIS IS A REFRESHING AND HEALTHY COMMITMENT TO AN EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS, NOT OF STUDENTS.

OTTERBEIN FACULTY KNOW THAT EDUCATION IS INDIVIDUAL, IT IS NOT GENERIC.

IN ALL OF THIS I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT EDUCATION IS A TONIC WHICH, WHEN SPRINKLED OVER THE HEADS OF UNDERGRADUATES, WILL BRING FORTH HUMANITARIANISM AND CREATIVITY. FAR FROM IT. CREATIVITY, CURIOSITY, COMPASSION AND INTEGRITY BALANCED WITH FLEXIBILITY, CANNOT BE ADMINISTERED IN THE CLASSROOM. BUT EDUCATION CAN INCITE LONG-LASTING INQUIRIES AND DISCOVERIES AND HONE THE EDGE OF THE RAW TALENT THAT GOD HAS CREATED.

FOR MY SIXTH PURPOSE OF EDUCATION I TURN TO THE MEMOIRS OF HAROLD MACMILLAN, THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER OF SEVERAL YEARS AGO. MR. MACMILLAN TOLD HOW ONE OF HIS PROFESSORS, A CLASSIC OXFORD DON, GREETED THE CLASS ON THE FIRST DAY. AND I QUOTE FROM THAT DON:



"GENTLEMEN, YOU ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK UPON A COURSE OF STUDIES WHICH WILL OCCUPY YOU FOR TWO YEARS. TOGETHER THEY FORM A NOBLE ADVENTURE, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO REMIND YOU OF AN IMPORTANT POINT. SOME OF YOU, WHEN YOU GO DOWN FROM THE UNIVERSITY WILL GO INTO THE CHURCH, OR TO THE BAR, OR TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, TO THE HOME CIVIL SERVICE, TO THE INDIAN OR COLONIAL SERVICES, OR INTO VARIOUS PROFESSIONS. SOME MAY GO INTO THE ARMY, SOME INTO INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, SOME MAY BECOME COUNTRY GENTLEMEN.

"A FEW...I HOPE VERY FEW...WILL BECOME TEACHERS OR DONS. LET ME MAKE THIS CLEAR TO YOU. EXCEPT IN THE LAST CATEGORY, NOTHING THAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THE COURSE OF YOUR STUDIES WILL BE OF THE SLIGHTEST POSSIBLE USE TO YOU IN AFTER LIFE...SAVE ONLY THIS... THAT IF YOU WORK HARD AND INTELLIGENTLY, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE -- TO TELL WHEN SOMEONE IS SPEAKING ROT -- AND THAT IN MY VIEW IS THE MAIN, IF NOT THE SOLE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION." END OF QUOTE.

CERTAINLY THAT DON HAD A TALENT FOR EXAGGERATION BUT WHAT HE MEANT, IS THAT THE WORLD WILL MAKE MORE SENSE TO YOU. YOU WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU READ, TO QUESTION, AND MAKE APPROPRIATE DECISIONS FOR YOUR LIFE BASED ON YOUR UNDERSTANDING.

YOU WILL BE ABLE TO CUT THROUGH THE FOG OF IMPRECISE, CONFUSING, AND CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS THAT PEOPLE WILL OFFER YOU. IN SHORT, YOU WILL BE HARDER TO FOOL, AND THAT'S NOT A BAD THING TO GET FROM AN EDUCATION.

ONE OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MY POSITION IS TO MAKE JUDGEMENTS ABOUT INDIVIDUALS AND PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE COLLEGE. I ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT JUDGEMENT IS A TWO-WAY STREET. EACH PERSON HERE WILL DEVELOP HIS OR HER OWN LIST BY WHICH TO JUDGE MY PERFORMANCE.

I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THREE QUESTIONS TO BE ADDED TO YOUR LIST:

(1) Do I WORK WITH YOU IN DEVELOPING A VITAL CENTER AROUND WHICH THE ACADEMIC LIFE SHALL BE ORGANIZED?

(2) Do I USE AUTHORITY DEMOCRATICALLY?

AND (3) Do I PERFORM MY RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD THE COMMUNITY IN SAFEGUARDING THE FREEDOM OF EDUCATION?

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MY EXPERIENCE HAS CONVINCED ME THAT THERE IS NO ONE BOOK WORTH READING ON HOW TO BE A COLLEGE PRESIDENT. RATHER THE PROPER ROAD IS THAT OF THE REASONABLE ADVENTURER -- INCLUDING HONESTY, TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY, INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY, INDEPENDENCE IN VALUE JUDGEMENTS, A SENSE OF HUMOR, AND IMPORTANTLY, SPIRITUAL NEEDS.

AS THE NINETEENTH PRESIDENT OF OTTERBEIN COLLEGE, I PLEDGE TO YOU MY COMMITMENT TO BEING A REASONABLE ADVENTURER AND ASK YOU TO JOIN ME ON OUR CONTINUING JOURNEY.