

DANFORTH

42

professional aspirations &
of academic orientation *

On so many forms, for so many years, ~~these same~~ questions have confronted me ~~that~~ that it is with a great and thankful facility that I can slip into my answers:

I am interested in studying the relationship of art (in its broadest sense) and politics. Later, I would like to apply my knowledge toward a university teaching career. These things are true, yet they neglect the doubt and soul-searching from which they emerged.

From one point of view, a discussion of academic and professional aspirations is irrelevant, not perhaps when set against an absolute measure, but certainly when compared to the frustrations of my generation. The entire concept of an academic life has justifiably been challenged as an increasingly artificial, ivory-tower separation from the real community of men. In a very real sense, to regard the university as entirely distinct from the community is to regard it as a sanctuary for the preservation of a rare breed of individuals. Is aiming for a profession^{er} a worthwhile intention? Is academic excellence a desirable goal? Two years ago, a history major graduating from Berkeley with the highest grade point average of any Letters and Sciences senior, addressed these words to the Academic Honor Association (of which I was a member); "The first thing I would like to tell you is that it was not worth it." In a materialistic competitive society such as our own, the accumulation of kudos becomes maximal in determining one's self-esteem, often to the detriment of other ways of measuring our contributions to self and to society. Because my generation values not institutions, but men; not contemplation, but action; not words, but feeling - it is frustrated by continual attempts to perpetuate and conform to traditions which it has outgrown.

Yet there is a time for every purpose. Action uncomplemented by thought and study is empty. Feeling which cannot be verbalized or in some sense communicated is an isolating agent alienating man from man. And the individual who is unceremoniously severed from all institutions finds a freedom which

Fromm defines not only as total, but also as intolerable. Furthermore, ~~the academic world is~~ ^{the academic world is} colleges, ~~academic investigations~~ ^{academic investigations} are undeniably more than traditions. Although ~~its~~ ^{its} current form may sometimes be archaic, ~~their~~ ^{its} content has a validity which I believe is still applicable. ~~If~~ ^{it does} at times ~~they~~ ^{it does} need to be reconstituted ~~they do not~~ ^{it does} need to be destroyed. ~~Thus~~ ^{it does} to uncover this validity is merely a matter of rediscovery and redefinition.

Americans value education, perhaps more as a degree than as a learning process, because paradoxically they do not value intellect. Thus the student entering college is apt to automatically feel a tremendous veneration for the educational institution of which he has become a part. ^{How to become part of educational inst.} At Berkeley, I demonstrated my respect by contributing to various committees whose purpose was to orient foreign students to an American college community. I participated in bi-cultural programs, acquiring an award from the French government in the process. I thought I was strengthening my academic community and furthering international relations. Later, I changed my focus. The image of a closed, eclectic system no longer seemed adequate. For three years, both at Berkeley and at Stanford, I worked with tutoring programs in an attempt to integrate the college community with that community to which most of the world belongs. In large part I ^{now} see this activity ~~now~~ as tokenism. But at least for me it provided an education. I approached tutoring with the conventional attitude of bestowing enlightenment on underprivileged youngsters. I came away at least having glimpsed the intricacies of the black and chicano sub-cultures and having perceived that a relationship, however tenuous and however denied, exists between my community and theirs. I am not saying that the college community should degenerate into an over-zealous political form, but only that it should view itself as part of a totality.

Just as the concept of college community must be altered, so must that of academic and professional attainment. To gain knowledge, to master a field of study of course are not inherently ignoble. Yet on several campuses an outcry has been raised against academicism and professionalism, the one
be

affect people and be affected by them. I regarded education as a committed art form, not unlike contemporary theater. It is not an instrument of persuasion, much less a propaganda tool, but a means of revealing and arousing. An instructor has the right, indeed cannot escape the compulsion to formulate opinions and interpretations. He also has the obligation to insure the supreme development of his students' critical faculties, even if this jeopardizes the security of his convictions. In Journey to the Frontier, Peter Stansky notes that Julian Bell, a young English radical who fought in the Spanish Civil War, questioned whether art is pertinent to revolution. I would suggest that it is the only possible, the only fair way of instigating change.

For several years I have realized that what was most important to me in the study of history was the experience of individual men ~~and~~ as expressed through literature, art, and social forms. This does not mean that history is the study of individuals. Nor does it mean that literature should be interpreted merely as an historical chronicle. But if these two disciplines are studied in an integral manner, then we may discover how art reflects its historical period, how it reacts to it, how it molds it.

I have attempted to accomplish this through a series of literature and history courses. Special projects: Blake - writings combination of personal world view with political propaganda for the French Revolution. He takes care to emphasize those elements of his philosophy which are in harmony with existing trends and to express them through balanced combination of contemporary idiom and private symbolism. While these elements retain their uniqueness, instead of appearing as the aberrations of an isolated mind, they become the variations of genius on many current themes. Honors thesis: role of art in supplementing, complementing or instigating radical political ideas. Like the development of class consciousness, changes in the relationship of art to politics provide an index for evaluating the direction and significance of political growth.

30
14
120
30
420

because it tends to isolate the individual from his society, the other because it tends to fix him uncritically within that society. At Berkeley, mass impersonalization and bureaucracy stifled me. At Stanford, I realized that size was not the only educational problem. I also perceived the difficulty in reconciling one's individual approach to learning with institutional requirements. After a quarter, I left the History Department in order to design an interdepartmental major, attempting to integrate the literature, culture, and history of England and America. I am attempting to become a cultural historian through a mixture of fields and approaches which I hope will ensure the relevance of academics to an understanding of my society. I have discovered it is possible to work within a traditional discipline (although admittedly one with a fairly short tradition) by defining my approach in a slightly different combination of terms which are nevertheless the terms of the institution. INSERT EXPLANATION OF MAJOR History becomes not only a study of geopolitical and diplomatic exchanges, influenced by economic crises and political maneuverings but also a record of men's thoughts and emotions.

Although I, like many of my contemporaries, am suspicious of professional aspirations, like them I identify myself with a career. Graduate study will, I hope, prepare me to teach at a college level, not only in order to explain society, but also to change it. In spite of the forceful arguments of such influential thinkers as Fanon and Genet, who maintain that only through blood can the oppressed achieve a social change which will express their humanity, I continue to rely on the educational process as a means of change. Winter quarter I was involved with the United Christian Ministry's draft resistance efforts. Perhaps the most important concept I assimilated during that time was that revolution can be a way of life, and not necessarily a violent one. Its key aspect is ultimately communication, the attempt to

graduate study - pursue similar lines of investigation. Spanish Civil War --
the role of the English and the American intellectual. How theories of art
molded 19th century America. The effect of the Industrial Revolution on the
novel. Transformation of politics into art - Henry May's description of a
coal mining disaster into a pageant of festivity. Develop a more coherent
theory. An organic relationship exists, yet not easy to describe it. How
social values are reflected in literature, Art as a manifestation of politics/