
Pro Rege

Volume 15 | Number 2


Article 3

December 1986

Calvinistic Philosophy and the Relation Between Liberal Education and Vocational Training

John Van Dyk
Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege

 Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Van Dyk, John (1986) "Calvinistic Philosophy and the Relation Between Liberal Education and Vocational Training," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 15: No. 2, 9 - 17.

Available at: http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol15/iss2/3

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.



A quarterly faculty publication of
Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa

Calvinistic Philosophy and the Relation Between Liberal Education and Vocational Training

John Van Dyk
Professor of Philosophy



John Van Dyk received his A.B. degree from Calvin College, M.A. from the University of Michigan, and Ph.D. from Cornell University. Dr. Van Dyk is Professor of Philosophy and serves as Director of the Dordt College Center for Educational Services.

I. Introduction

There can be no doubt that a major contribution of Calvinistic philosophy has been its stress on integrality. A glance at the history and development of a philosophy such as that of the Cosmomic Idea, usually associated with the name of Herman Dooyeweerd, clearly reveals the story of an attempt to combat polarizations, fragmentations, and dualisms. Both Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, key figures in the Calvinistic philosophical movement of our century, devoted their lives to a battle with synthesis, nature/grace, and other tension-ridden and contradictory ground motives. Reformational philosophy, furthermore, has rightly at-

tacked and exposed a variety of absolutizations and reductionisms.

Such major themes as the theory of sphere universality, enkapsis, the subject-object relation, and the connection between scientific and non-scientific knowledge have contributed significantly to our understanding of integrality and interrelatedness.¹ Indeed, over the years a growing arsenal of philosophical tools has been developed, designed to assist the Christian community in its struggle with the paganistic, secular, disintegrating forces controlling the various sectors of our society.

In view of all this fruitful activity, it does seem rather incongruous that the tools and insights of Calvinistic philosophizing have yet to

be applied consistently and effectively to the very arena within which they were born: the sphere of education. In reviewing the literature produced by those who have made the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea their starting point, one cannot help but be struck by the paucity of reflection on contemporary education.² Why such a neglect at a time when progressively perplexing problems beset curricular and instructional theorists around the globe? I know of no satisfying answer. If, perhaps, there is any one educational area at all to which Calvinistic philosophy has devoted more than

regarded vocational training as the responsibility of industry rather than of the educational sphere, thereby leaving the schools free to orient themselves primarily to academic, liberal arts pursuits.⁵ In some other European countries, such as Greece, the stress has remained on classical and general studies, even after technical and vocational training had come to form an integral part of the educational enterprise.⁶ In still other countries, notably the Netherlands, a multi-track system, institutionally embodied, allowed students to pursue either academic or vocational training.

In view of all this fruitful activity, it does seem rather incongruous that the tools and insights of Calvinistic philosophizing have yet to be applied consistently and effectively to the very arena within which they were born: the sphere of education...Why such a neglect at a time when progressively perplexing problems beset curricular and instructional theorists around the globe?

passing attention, it is the question of the Christian school as a distinct societal sphere.³

It is my thesis that one of the most important tasks awaiting those who espouse a reformational philosophy is to come to grips, in systematic and sustained fashion, with the polarizations and fragmentations plaguing contemporary educational theory. For discussion in this paper I single out one of the more pressing problems, namely, the relationship between the so-called liberal arts on the one hand and professional or vocational education on the other.

II. The Problem of Liberal Education

During the last several decades the world of education has been alive with debate about the validity and meaning of the liberal arts.⁴ In Europe the issue manifested itself in ways different from those in North America. For one thing, a number of European countries have

A number of factors created problems for European academic and vocational education. Of these the most significant has been the question of democratization. It has become increasingly clear that proportionally a much larger number of students from middle and upper classes than from the lower social strata pursued higher academic education. Thus the liberal arts came to be associated with the elite. To counteract such social disparity, many European countries have engaged in large-scale comprehensive reforms, especially on the secondary level.⁷ In spite of such efforts, however, the problem about the proper relationship between academic liberal education and vocational training and its bearing on the question of democratization does not appear to have been satisfactorily solved.⁸ It can be noted only in passing at this point that in the developing countries of the world similar difficulties confront the educational sphere. Severe economic pressures complicate the issue.⁹

American higher education, meanwhile, has been largely of the academic liberal arts type, while vocational training was relegated to mostly secondary levels. But after the turbulent sixties, in which questions of social justice were at the forefront of the university, a renewed career orientation and professionalism set in. At the same time, increasing economic pressures confronted educational institutions. The so-called liberal arts colleges, which include the Reformed colleges in North America, have come upon difficult times as enrollments decline and costs soar. Increasingly, public institutions of higher learning have begun to introduce vocational and professional training in order to survive.¹⁰

This situation has greatly contributed to a confrontation between liberal education and professional training in North America. The recent literature bears this out.¹¹ Clearly, there is continuing, if not increasing, disdain for each other. That is, proponents of the liberal arts, often ivory-towerish, consider practical professional training as inferior. Technical and vocational schools, on the other hand, regard the liberal arts as largely irrelevant, and, as a result, tend to confine themselves to the teaching of "useful" skills.

Since the debate has entered the circle of Christian education,¹² the issue is not to be lightly dismissed. Indeed, crucial questions of office-consciousness and the integrality of life are at stake. The idea, for example, that there exists a hierarchy of professions, such that those occupations which presuppose an extensive liberal arts education are to be more highly regarded than those requiring vocational training, creates a distorted sense of calling and office. The separation between academic, liberal arts education and vocational training, furthermore, gives rise to a warped understanding of the place of work. An education divided between technical training and liberal arts leads us to believe that life is to be divided between our daily work and everything else. Hence we commonly find in the Christian community what we may call a double dualism: a dualism between so-called "religious" activities and daily societal life—a grace/nature dichotomy in-

herited from the Middle Ages—and a dualism between vocation and recreation in the "nonreligious" sector of life. The polarity between liberal education and vocational training contributes in no small way to such dualism.

What Christian reformational philosophers and educators need to address, it seems to me, is the question of the very legitimacy of the distinction between liberal education and vocational training. Christian institutions, more often than not, appear to merely assume that liberal arts and professional training constitute two meaningful categories, to be carefully kept separate. Such an assumption requires examination.

A cluster of related issues accompanies the problem of the relationship between liberal and professional education. There is, for example, the question of the relation between general education and specialization, or between formal and nonformal education.¹³ Is it meaningful, moreover, to speak of a contrast between "preparation" for vocation and vocational "training"?¹⁴ How does the relationship between academic education and vocational training relate to the relationship between theory and practice? Is the question of liberal, general education and vocational training primarily a curricular question? An instructional question? A social question? An economic, or even political question? These and other issues await our attention.

III. A Historical Survey

The idea of academic, liberal arts, conceived as "disinterested" and discipline-oriented non-professional education, goes back a long way. Since its history has been described in many and sundry ways, I shall restrict myself to some general observations.¹⁵ First, it needs to be noted that the elements of early academic, liberal arts education find their roots in ancient Greek culture. The medieval *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic goes back to pre-fourth-century Greek times. What came to be known in the Middle Ages as the *quadrivium*, i.e., arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy, was already suggested by the

Sophist Hippias, who based his views on earlier Pythagorean developments.¹⁶

Regarding the nature of liberal education, Aristotle's pronouncement in Book VIII of his *Politics* initiates the tradition. "There is a distinction," he said, "between liberal and illiberal subjects, and it is clear that only such knowledge as does not make the learner mechanical should enter into education." There has been some controversy about the precise meaning of Aristotle's distinction.¹⁷ That should not surprise us, of course. After all, is there anything in Aristotle *not* subject to debate?

Although the liberal arts appear to have been somewhat devaluated in the Hellenistic Age, in Roman and early medieval times they regained their preeminence. Seneca, for example, defined liberal education as follows: "You see why liberal studies are so called: it is because they are worthy of freeborn men. But there is only one really liberal study—that which gives man his liberty. It is the study of wisdom; and that is lofty, brave, and great-souled. All other studies are puny and puerile."¹⁸ Martianus Capella, an African Neoplatonist with Stoic tendencies, reaffirmed the value of the liberal arts.¹⁹ Meanwhile Augustine, whose influence on subsequent Christendom can scarcely be calculated, stressed the liberal arts as necessary preparation for theological study.²⁰

The early medieval universities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries constructed a curriculum which included the liberal arts. The nature/grace scheme provided the context. Theology, functioning as the queen of the sciences, occupied a place in the realm of grace. In the realm of nature we find the liberal arts, together with professional education in medicine and law. Philosophy, meanwhile, played a role intermediate between theology and the arts.²¹

In modern times the distinction between liberal, academic education and education slanted towards vocation remained, be it under different names with diverse content. Renaissance humanist education, for example, continued the stress on the arts, though shifting its emphasis from logic to rhetoric and literary

style.²² Reformation schools, too, retained the seven liberal arts, plus philosophy and theology, and added Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

The history of education since the sixteenth century is complex. It is of interest to note that learned societies and academies began to take the academic leadership away from the European universities. In the meantime, powerful forces of Rationalism took hold. After the French Revolution the universities underwent revival. If anywhere the separation between the liberal arts and professionalism might have faded somewhat, it was in the German universities of the nineteenth century. They emphasized research and the finding of solutions to practical problems. The universities in England, however, retained a strong orientation to the liberal arts.²³ American higher education, in turn, was modelled largely after these British universities.²⁴

It should be noted that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the curriculum of liberal education continuously shifted and varied. New disciplines, such as sociology and psychology, and a stress on natural science prompted extensive debate about what is and what is not to be included in a liberal arts program.²⁵ Controversy was further fueled by the tendency of natural scientists to work as teams, in contrast to the traditional individualism of the liberal arts.²⁶

Vocational education as we know it today finds its roots in the history of apprenticeship.²⁷ Philosophers such as Leibniz and Descartes, meanwhile, had already advocated the establishment of schools in the "mechanical arts." The trade school as institution, however, did not emerge until the eighteenth century. Growing industrialization and increased economic competition among nations provided strong motives for the further development of vocational schools. Once vocational education came into its own as a flourishing institutional reality during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—at various rates of speed in various countries—the question of its relation to general, academic, liberal education asserted itself with great force. In the 1934 edition of the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, for example,

we read: "There is further the problem of discovering an appropriate adjustment between vocational and general education. The individual is first a citizen and then a worker; education in citizenship and training for a vocation are equally essential for social welfare.... There still remains a question whether general and vocational education should be blended or parallel or whether vocational should follow general education."²⁸ Note the assumption of the legitimate dichotomy between general education and vocational training.

IV. An Interpretation

The dichotomy—indeed, the polarity—between academic, liberal arts education and professional/vocational training ultimately derives its validity from a Greek, rather than a biblical epistemology. Ancient Greek philosophy, from Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Parmenides to Roman times, sharply separated knowing from doing.²⁹ Moreover, the Greeks deemed theoretic thinking—regarded as the essential ingredient of knowing—vastly superior to mere doing or conduct. The Scriptures, however, do not draw such a contrast between knowing and doing. Particularly in the Old Testament, knowing and doing virtually coincide.³⁰ The contrast, indeed, is not between *knowing* and doing, but between *hearing* and doing. Knowing is a form of doing. Obedient knowing is a form of obedient doing, and both of them, together with all of life's functions, are to constitute one continuous and integrated obedient response to what we hear to be the Word of the Lord.

The Christian tradition has not taken this biblical given sufficiently seriously, it seems to me. Instead of the Scriptures, an Aristotelian philosophy has largely determined the educational vision of the Christian West. Aristotle's formal distinction between the theoretical and the practical sciences has never really departed from our civilization. The Hellenistic Stoics enhanced the Aristotelian line by their emphasis on the rational *logos* as a guide for conduct. The early Christian church, especially in the Apologist synthesis, adopted the distinction

between knowing and doing, postulating that the antithesis between Christian and pagan is to be located in conduct rather than in thinking.³¹ Christian knowledge is merely a clarification of pagan knowledge; hence in the realm of the intellect there is direct continuity between paganism and Christianity. The place where Christians really differ from the pagans, according to the Apologist synthesis, is to be looked for in the area of doing, not of knowing: Christians are to refrain from immorality and idol worship, but need not reject the fundamental patterns of Greek philosophy.

The medieval intellectual tradition produced no essential changes in this view. Quite typical is, for instance, Thomas Aquinas, who tells us that the liberal arts pertain to the contemplative and speculative, rather than to the active and productive life of man.³² Thus the distinction between knowing and doing remains.

The Renaissance continued to maintain a line of demarcation between the "liberal" and the "productive" arts. If education is to "produce" anything at all, it is the cultured man of letters and taste. The Reformation, with its stress on *vocatio*, called the Christian community back to its task of service. Thus it discarded the earlier medieval view of the Christian life as contemplation of the divine. Nevertheless, the Reformation was unable to implement structurally an education which would integrate knowing and doing along biblical norms. All too soon the spirits of Rationalism took over to renew a Greek separatistic intellectualism, now placed within the dialectic of nature and freedom, thereby sharpening the polarity between theory and practice. Nineteenth-century Neo-idealism, furthermore, enhanced the divorce between knowing and doing by intellectualizing both nature and freedom: curricularly and educationally, *nature* is to be understood via the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*), and *freedom* is the special prerogative of the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*).³³

Twentieth-century attempts to relate theory with practice, general education with professional studies, and the liberal arts with vocational training, can hardly be said to have

succeeded, as we saw. Yet these attempts, it seems to me, testify to a sense of creational normativity. That is, secular educational theories, too, recognize that the structure of reality will not permit the separation between theory and practice to continue forever.

Christian educational movements in the twentieth century have not yet come to grips with the relation between liberal education and vocational, professional training. Most Christian colleges, for example, uncritically accept the legitimacy of the liberal arts.³⁴ Secondary Christian education, meanwhile, has largely accepted the view that *real* education is academic education; their curricula, therefore, have been

professional. Instead, the insight we must seek to instill is to be closely linked with the biblical concept of "knowing," "understanding," or "wisdom." Such insight is not merely abstract, "disinterested," or academic. On the contrary, built into it must be the practical capability of taking corrective, normative action, whether in academic life, or in one's vocation, in marriage, political life, or wherever. Indeed, vocational training must incorporate and integrate the required academic "liberal arts" insight, while so-called liberal, general education must enable one to live obediently in one's vocation. In sum, Christian education is an interplay between a broad, academic understanding of the

The Greeks deemed theoretic thinking—regarded as the essential ingredient of knowing—vastly superior to mere doing or conduct. The Scriptures, however, do not draw such a contrast between knowing and doing. Particularly in the Old Testament, knowing and doing virtually coincide. The contrast, indeed, is not between knowing and doing, but between hearing and doing.

mainly college preparation curricula which force the vocationally-minded youngsters of the Christian community to fend for themselves or to enter secular, frequently scorned vocational institutions.

If our educational efforts are to be biblically primed rather than informed by pagan Greek philosophy, then the first question we must ask is not "What type of education shall we provide, general liberal arts education or vocational training or both?" Rather, we ought to ask "What kind of insight and educational experiences are we as educators to provide in order to equip our students for fulltime Kingdom service in a distorted and deformed world?" The insight required, I want to argue, is neither of a liberal arts nor of a strictly vocational character. It does not consist of a combination of two kinds of learning, academic and

world and its cultures, and a practical ability to implement, not only in one's vocation but in all dimensions of life, what has been theoretically understood.³⁵

V. The Task of Reformational Philosophy

Because it possesses remarkably integrating tools, reformational philosophy is in a unique position, and hence perhaps uniquely called, to address the dichotomy between liberal arts and vocational education. Three areas in particular require attention.

A. *The Nature of Educational Institutions*—As stated earlier, this theme has doubtlessly received more attention from Christian philosophy than any of the others. Yet a large number of unanswered questions remains. Here in the United States, for example, we are

presently bound by an educational system composed of elementary, secondary, college (undergraduate), and graduate education. The nature of a college as an intermediate institution is not clear. Is it currently a hybrid between secondary and university education? What is its qualifying function? Is this function different from that of elementary and secondary education? The steady growth of separate vocational institutions in the United States complicates the question. How are these institutions related to secondary education on the one hand and to higher education on the other? What characterizes them? The question becomes the more urgent as enrollment and financial pressures nudge the "liberal arts" colleges to consider and adopt vocational programs, often without a clear rationale.

In addition, we need to review the role of integrated Christian education as an expression of the *ecclesia*, the body of Christ. Questions of goals and objectives of our academic institutions in a changing culture loom large and must be addressed once again. In North America the zeal for and commitment to separate Christian education is declining. A rising materialism and secularism undoubtedly account for a good part of this phenomenon. Uncertainty about the task of Christian education within the larger context of the Kingdom of God, however, plays an important role as well.

B. Curricular Theory—Surely a central issue in the relationship between the liberal arts and vocational education is the curriculum. From our perspective, a curriculum reflects a view of the encyclopedia, while an understanding of the encyclopedia, in turn, is determined by one's view of reality. Aristotle's distinction between the theoretical and practical sciences, for example, reflects his intellectualistic outlook which prompted him to draw a sharp line of demarcation between knowing and doing. The relation between the liberal arts and theology reflects the medieval ground motive of nature and grace. And the nineteenth-century division between the humanities and the natural sciences is a consequence of Neo-idealist views of reality as a tension-ridden combination of mind and matter.

Again, reformational philosophy is in a unique position to apply its theory of modality to the construction of a curriculum.³⁶ Such an application could be further developed by drawing the implications of sphere universality: modal interrelatedness could be translated into curricular interrelatedness. Moreover, the relation between theoretical and non-theoretical knowing needs to come to curricular expression. Such applications would surely revise our views of liberal and vocational education.

C. Theory of Instruction—To date, reformational philosophy has paid scant attention to this important facet of academic and vocational education, especially in recent years.³⁷ What is instruction anyway? How do instructional theories relate to theories of personality development, of learning, and of interpersonal relations? Meaningful communal scholarship is required here. Our philosophical perspective on anthropology, epistemology, and ontology may well provide a context for fruitful theorizing.

VI. Conclusion

Our continuing neglect of major educational issues, such as the one just examined, is, in my opinion, not justified. Certainly the preoccupation with important questions such as the nature of technology, our political task, economic stewardship, and the history of philosophy is not out of place. Such work must go on. But it must be balanced with a concentrated and co-ordinated effort to understand and enhance our task as Christian educators, particularly at a time when the liberal arts at last appear to have entered a crisis long overdue. Meanwhile our civilization is undergoing rapid change. There can be no doubt that Christian education will soon be confronted with all sorts of unpredictable, massive challenges. But if we make little or no effort to solve our problems today, where shall we be tomorrow?

Notes

³⁶Cf. H. Hart's comments on the role of reformational

scholarship in his essay "Struggle for a New Direction" in *Hearing and Doing: Philosophical Essays Dedicated to H. Evan Runner* (Toronto: Wedge, 1979), pp. 1-13, particularly pp. 12 and 13, where he says, e.g., "Within that Dooyeweerdian approach, work has been done on the relation between...theory and the rest of humanity and the cosmos." He urges continued reflection on the relation between "theorizing and all non-theoretical dimensions of the cosmos." See also J.P.A. Mekkes' essay "Methodology and Practice" in *The Idea of a Christian Philosophy*, (Toronto: Wedge, 1973), pp. 77-83.

²A survey of the contents of, e.g., *Philosophia Reformata* reveals a conspicuous absence of educational concern. Note also the paucity of reformational reflection indicated in otherwise fairly exhaustive bibliographies of sources such as those found on pp. 162-166 of A. De Graaff's *The Educational Ministry of the Church* (Nutley, N.J.: The Craig Press, 1968), or at the conclusion of the dissertation of D. G. Blomberg, *The Development of Curriculum with Relation to the Philosophy of the Cosmological Idea* (unpublished, University of Sydney, Australia, 1978).

³The tradition goes back, of course, to Groen Van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuiper. Vigorous discussion has continued both in the Netherlands and in North America.

⁴For a good survey, consult the back issues of journals such as *Liberal Education* and *Comparative Education Review*.

⁵*Education and Science*, Ministry of Education and Science, The Hague, 1974, p. 4.

⁶V. N. Kontogiannopoulos, "Goals of Educational Reform Policies," *Comparative Education Review*, 22 (1978), pp. 3-6.

⁷*Education and Science*, pp. 10-11.

⁸*Ibid*, p. 22, and H. M. Levin, "The Dilemma of Comprehensive Secondary School Reform in Western Europe," *Comparative Education Review*, 22 (1978), pp. 434-451. See also the discussions carried on in *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde* (e.g., G. Van Roon, "Op weg naar een nieuw onderwijsbeleid, aan de top en aan de basis," (April, 1970), pp. 204-220, or H. G. Van den Doel, "De externe democratisering als onderwijsdoelstelling voor het geïntegreerd voortgezet onderwijs," (August, 1973), pp. 229-233), and the *NUFFIC* (Netherlands Universities Foundation for International Cooperation) *Bulletin* (e.g., "Towards Coordination and Democratisation of Research and Development Policy" in the Vol. 18, 1974, issue entitled *Higher Education and Research in the Netherlands*, pp. 21-26, 30), etc.

⁹For the literature, consult the back issues of *Comparative Education Review*. I cite one relatively recent discussion: E. B. Barber, "General Education versus Special Education for Rural Development," *Comparative Education Review*, 25 (1981), pp. 216-231.

¹⁰For a graphic description of the situation, see, e.g., articles such as "Battle Looms as 4-year Institutions Look to Vocational Education," *The Chronicle for Higher Education*, November, 1981.

¹¹One need merely survey the back issues of journals such as *Liberal Education*, *The Chronicle for Higher Education*, and *Viewpoints in Teaching and Learning*.

¹²Cf. the February/March 1986 issue of *Christian Educators Journal*. The theme of this issue is "Traditional or Technical Emphasis in the Curriculum?"

¹³Cf. T. J. La Belle, "An Introduction to the Nonformal Education of Children and Youth," *Comparative Education Review*, 25 (1981), pp. 313-329.

¹⁴For this distinction, see, e.g., P. G. W. Du Plessis, "University, Student, and Profession," *Philosophia Reformata*, 33 (1968), p. 190.

¹⁵Some of the relevant literature: J. Bowen, *Theories of Education: Studies of Significant Innovation in Western Educational Thought* (New York: Wiley, 1974); W. Boyd, *The History of Western Education* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965); R. F. Butts, *A Cultural History of Education: Reassessing our Cultural Traditions* (New York & London: McGraw-Hill, 1947); E.B. Castle, *Ancient Education and Today* (Baltimore: Penguin books, 1961); F. Eby, *The Development of Modern Education, in Theory, Organization, and Practice* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952); F. P. Graves, several works on the history of education; H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, translated by G. Lamb (New York: New American Library, 1964, c. 1956); R. C. Pounds, *The Development of Education in Western Culture* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968). See also the articles "Liberal Arts" by B. M. Ashley in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1967), Vol. 8, p. 696-698, and "Liberal Education" by P. Hirst in Vol. 5 of *The Encyclopedia of Education* (New York: MacMillan, 1971), pp. 505-509. Finally, see also the chapter on the history of liberal education in the Calvin College Curriculum Study Committee publication *Christian Liberal Arts Education* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 1-26.

¹⁶Cf. B. M. Ashley, "Liberal Arts," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1967), Vol. 8, p. 696.

¹⁷Cf. H. Johnston's article "Liberal Education" in Vol. 8 of the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1967), pp. 700-701.

¹⁸*Epistles*, 88.

¹⁹The liberal arts are described in his *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*. F. B. Artz calls this book "dull" and "clumsy," yet "one of the most successful textbooks ever written," *The Mind of the Middle Ages* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1953), pp. 184-185.

²⁰Helpful is the essay of W. Elgersma Helleman, "Augustine's Early Writings on a Liberal Arts Education," *Hearing and Doing*, pp. 119-133. However, she does not discuss or evaluate the meaning of the liberal arts as such.

²¹To date an indispensable source remains H. Rashdall's *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, updated by F.M. Powicke and A. B. Emden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936).

²²The literature on the Renaissance is vast and continues to expand. Of particular interest for our topic are the works of P. Kristeller, *The Classics and Renaissance Thought* (New York: Harper, 1961); E.F. Rice, Jr., *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958); and W. H. Woodward, *Studies in Education*

during the Age of the Renaissance (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965).

²²Some of the most famous and eloquent defenses of the English university as a liberal arts institution can be found in the writings of J. H. Newman, especially in his *Idea of a University* (latest edition, Oxford: Clarendon, 1976).

²³For documentation, see, e.g., S. E. Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935) and R. Hofstadter and W. Smith, *American Higher Education: a Documentary History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

²⁴For the literature, see P. Hirst's article "Liberal Education," *The Encyclopedia of Education* (New York: MacMillan, 1971), Vol. 5, pp. 505-509.

²⁵Cf. K. A. Bruffee, "The Structure of Knowledge and the Future of Liberal Education," *Liberal Education*, 67 (1981), pp. 177-186.

²⁶The literature on vocational education is extensive and growing. For a survey of the history of vocational education and the relevant bibliography on the topic, see *The Encyclopedia of Education* (New York: MacMillan, 1971), Vol. 9, pp. 473-480.

²⁷*Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: MacMillan, 1959 reprint), Vol. 15, p. 273.

²⁸As early as the fifth century B.C. Greek philosophers such as Anaxagoras and Empedocles exhibited a curious fascination with the mind. According to Anaxagoras, "Mind" set all things in motion (Fragment 12), and Empedocles talks about a "Mind" that darts throughout the whole universe with its swift thoughts (Fragment 134). Parmenides, also of the fifth century B.C., may well be regarded as the "father of scientism."

²⁹E.g., Psalm 111:10, "A good *understanding* have all they that *do* his commandments" [italics mine, JVD]. Psalm 119:100, "I understand more than the aged, because I have kept Thy precepts."

³⁰Justin Martyr is an outstanding example of this position. For further discussion, see my essay "The Relation Between Faith and Action: An Introduction," *Pro Rege*, 10 (4) (1982), pp. 2-7.

³¹In his commentary on the *De Trinitate* of Boethius. Cf. B.M. Ashley, "Liberal Arts," *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1967), Vol. 8, p. 696.

³²Particularly clear in the philosophy of Hermann Cohen (1842-1918), Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915), and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936).

³³A good example is the report of the Calvin College Curriculum Study Committee entitled *Christian Liberal Arts Education* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1970). It adopts the traditional position. On p. 3 of the Introduction, for example, we read: "Amid all the variations in the sense of the term *liberal arts education*, one factor is constant. What everyone who uses the term agrees on...is that a liberal arts education is one which is not aimed at equipping the student to hold down some specific occupation. Accordingly, when we speak of "liberal arts education" in the discussion which follows...we wish to be understood as meaning non-vocational and non-professional education."

³⁴Dordt College has made a conscious and concerted effort to break through the polarity between liberal arts and vocational education. I quote from its statement of purpose, a document entitled *The Educational Task of Dordt College*: "Dordt College must strive to transmit the kind of insight that will enable Christians to discern the will of the Lord for any situation and to develop the capacity to implement it. Serviceable insight, therefore, prepares for Kingdom citizenship. And Dordt, as a Christian college, aims to train Kingdom citizens aware of the demands of the cultural mandate, equipped to take their place and carry out their tasks within the community of believers, able to discern the spiritual direction of our civilization, and prepared to advance, in loving service, the claims of Christ over all areas of life.

"The Christian insight that Dordt seeks to impart is, therefore, not merely abstract and theoretical. While at its most fundamental level it reflects an understanding of the structure and workings of God's created order, insight includes other dimensions as well, such as the practical ability to carry out one's task in loving obedience and service. Moreover, built into Christian insight is the motivation and desire to function effectively as a Kingdom citizen.

"It is clear, therefore, that Dordt is to provide multi-dimensional insight in which theory and practice, though formally distinguishable, are nevertheless closely integrated. The Dordt graduate must have both a theoretical understanding of a situation and the practical ability and skill to be reformingly busy in response to God's call to service. For that reason, practice or skill is not to be separated from its imbeddedness in the wider structural context to be theoretically understood; nor is the theoretical understanding of God's creation to be divorced from the practical capacity to implement the will of the Lord in everyday situations.

"It is evident that in our complex society a growing number of vocations require deepening insight of the kind that Dordt seeks to provide. One goal of the College is to identify those occupational areas where serviceable insight is increasingly needed. In principle no legitimate profession, occupation, vocation, or station in life can be precluded from Dordt's educational concern. Wherever insight is required, there Dordt College is called to supply it." (from chapter 3, "Content"). See also Du Plessis, "University, Student, and Profession," *Philosophia Reformata*, 33 (1968), p. 192.

³⁵For attempts to do so, see, e.g., J. Van Dyk, "Towards a Basic Framework for a Christian Curriculum," *To Prod the Slumbering Giant* (Toronto: Wedge, 1972), pp. 171-189; "A Key Component in a Christian College Curriculum," *Building the House: Essays in Christian Education* (Sioux Center, Iowa: Dordt College Press, 1981), pp. 99-113. See also the dissertation of D. G. Blomberg (mentioned in note 2), *The Development of Curriculum with Relation to the Philosophy of the Cosmological Idea* (unpublished, University of Sydney, Australia, 1978).

³⁶Recently the Dordt College Studies Institute has begun work on the development and implementation of a Christian theory of instruction.