

September 8, 1994

Prof. Dr. Ludwig Huber
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Dear Ludwig,

You have left it up to me whether or not I should translate your monograph. I have done so -- having undertaken the word-by-word job in late June and now, after a busy summer of teaching, having returned to the typescript in an attempt to make some improvements. The task is well worth whatever effort it takes. Yes, my colleagues and I already know much of what you have written. But we are self-conscious and either prejudiced or susceptible to the charge of being prejudiced. You bring a keen-sighted and keen-eared objectivity to the description of our college. Like the beloved figure of science-fiction, the anthropologist coming to Earth from one of the moons of Saturn, or like the geologist examining an exposed stratum of rock as a "time-slice," you tell us how we have appeared in February, 1994.

A number of my colleagues have expressed an interest in reading what you have written: the administrators who knew of your visit, the faculty members whose programs you visited, and especially Steve Hunter (Institutional Research) and our Library archivist, who wishes very much to preserve for the future your assessment of how the college appeared in this past year. Another group of people who should read your monograph are our trustees. (Is there a German equivalent -- a board of over-seers appointed by a political official, who have the ultimate legal authority over the institution and, in effect, are the employers of our president, but whose membership changes as a result of rotation and appointments for past political favors?) At any rate, some of our current trustees have little understanding of what, in a national and international setting, we are doing. They might view internal reports as self-serving. But your report indicates why our curricular design is unusual and perhaps worth preserving.

I have a further selfish purpose. One of my mentors, an emeritus professor of Lafayette College, in Pennsylvania, has been watching us with some interest. One of my classmates from Lafayette has now become the president of that college and is fostering some innovations. Another college classmate, a major executive in the computer and communications industries, has been pressing me for an account of what Evergreen does and why we might be doing it. With your permission, I should like to send the translation to them.

When you can spare the time, I should like you to check my translation and make suggestions; for I shall not send copies of it to anyone until I have your reactions and suggestions. You

will notice that I have sometimes broken up your sentences and paragraphs into shorter units but at other times filled out some grammatical constructions which you had expressed more compactly. I have made these changes in the interest of clarity and with an awareness of the difference between German academic style and the assumptions of American readers. I trust I have not done too much violence to your argument in the process. With your permission, I might also reduce the number of parentheses, which are not so common in our expository writing as in yours.

Here are some specific questions for you:

-- I feel the need to append a substantial translator's note on the meaning of Fach. What do you think of my proposed addendum?

-- In my final translation, I shall add your German title. But I need guidance on whether Ein Beispiel should be "An Example of" (too pallid), "An Example for" (perhaps too strong), "A Model of" (perhaps too strong), or "A Model for" -- which lets the reader decide. It's up to you.

-- I need help on arbeitsgleiche Seminare, S. 12. I know what you mean. During my year at Bonn, my classmates were impressed by the fact that I produced Seminararbeiten in two seminars during each semester. When I told them that Yale required such performances in four seminars each semester, they thought this requirement to be a sign of American superficiality. What do you propose that I use at this point, other than my translator's note?

-- You lose me on the distinction between aspektivisch and perspektivisch, S. 18. From what follows, I believe that I get your meaning. But my dictionaries do not use the terms, and I have not had time to talk with a colleague much better versed in social-scientific or philosophical distinctions than I am. Should I leave the passage as I have it? Do you have a suggestion?

-- How do you think I should handle the translator's notes? I wish to put all your notes in [] directly after their appearance in the text, and I was thinking of using [Tr. note] for mine. What is your preference?

These are my questions. I am sure that, as you peruse my attempt at a translation, you will have many more suggestions. Please let me have all of them which come to mind. In the meantime, I give you (1) a bit of information, (2) an argument, and (3) a bit of shameless autobiography.

(1) A Bit of Information: On your S. 21, you write: "Evergreen ... muesste aber wohl fuer die Individual Learning Contracts ebenfalls noch eine Form der Zusammenfassung und Betreuung in kleinen Gruppen statt nur der Einzelberatung entwickeln." Such an option exists, under the nomenclature "Cluster Contracts" and

under the catalogue-heading "Student-Originated Studies" ("SOS"). The option is available in almost all of the Specialty Planning Areas. I sponsored a group of five ambitious students two years ago who gathered to read the works of James Joyce, including Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. In the fall quarter about to begin, I have agreed to sponsor eight students who have approached me with a plan to study and to write short prose fiction. Because each student may have a slightly different goal, we use the individual contract forms. But the group arrives at a covenant of its own, along guidelines which I have laid down, for exactly how much interaction they will have and how much will be done on personal initiative, for how many meetings they will hold among themselves and how many with me, and for the productions which they expect of each other and I shall expect of them individually. Since you have read our materials so carefully and have missed this option (halfway between "Group Contracts" and "Individual Contracts"), it appears that we need to express ourselves more clearly.

(2) An Argument: On your S. 19, you suggest the possibility of a system which would combine interdisciplinary and disciplinary studies, sei es parallel, sei es phasenweise. I submit that such mixtures do not work, and I do so not from theoretical concerns for "pure" forms but from practical experience. The departmentalized disciplines which the U.S. took over from the German university system, starting with Gilman at Johns Hopkins in 1876, have developed so much inertial momentum that more flexible interdisciplinary programs cannot compete with them.

As an educational politician and then Associate Dean at Oberlin College in the 1960's, I did what I could to get programs started as alternatives to departments, especially in those areas of the arts such as music theater, where interdisciplinary collaboration seemed to be at the heart of the enterprise. Sadly, at the end of my time there, I helped with a reorganization of the participating faculty members into departments, with departmental territory, departmental budgets, and departmental evaluations -- as the only way in which they and their offerings could survive.

I have met people from the University of California, Santa Cruz, which attempted to run a combination of interdisciplinary studies and departmentally organized courses. Their "interdisciplinarity" has by now degenerated into a few pale "current affairs" discussion groups.

In the 1970's at Evergreen, I witnessed what happened to the "mixture" of Fairhaven College with Western Washington University. Formed with great hopes in the late 1960's, Fairhaven has gradually degenerated into a single office, which administers a few small programs am auessersten Rande des Fachstudiums. I asked the Dean of Fairhaven in the mid-1970's whether he thought it preferable to be working in a (then-healthy) satellite of a

conventional institution, in which the students could go back and forth and in which the innovations could be politically and fiscally protected by the parent institution, to working at the natural sciences and the arts." Not only did a majority of the faculty and the administrators oppose his designs; the students also spoke out most strongly about the reasons why they had chosen Evergreen. We reaffirmed our commitment. In leaving, Merv did not expect us to last much longer. We're still here.

Certainly some accommodation with the departmentalized academic world is in order. As academic dean, I deliberately volunteered to oversee the first two years of our "modular courses" -- teaching a course on Shakespeare myself -- because I did not trust them and wanted to keep them in hand. But it must be the interdisciplinary programs and other options which we institutionally protect while holding work in divisive departmentalized fields to a minimum. Otherwise the German-graduate-university practices will override the English-collegiate education of citizens as they have been doing in this country for over a hundred years. I'll put up \$500 as a wager that if a "mixed" system were instituted at Evergreen, within ten years at the least and twenty years at the most, the practices and benefits of our "interdisciplinarity" would wither into mere traces of what you have witnessed. We would become like the Fairhaven office or the Santa Cruz discussion groups.

You see, I do subscribe to what a colleague has said: "Other institutions want you to know what the departmental disciplines are talking about; Evergreen wants you to know what you're talking about." We have a mission different from yours. You must, by the very terms of your founding, present a more or less "mixed" system of disciplinary realities and interdisciplinary hopes. We, unlike Oberlin College and you, do not exist to prepare students for further academic study. If some of our brightest people wish to go on, fine. But the test of our success will come with the flexibility, initiative, collaboration, and creativity which our graduates show. no

matter what paths of endeavor they pursue later. It reminds me of a paperback which came out when I was a student at Bonn, Das Buergerrecht zur Bildung. We are interested in the Bildung of Buerger, hoffentlich zur Gerechtigkeit.

(3) A Bit of Shameless Autobiography: During my undergraduate years, one of the most influential books in my life was Thomas Carlyle's Sartor Resartus. It spoke to me at a time when I was undergoing some of the philosophical and religious questionings which its main figure experienced. I don't know if you're acquainted with the work. Carlyle, having just translated Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre and ... Wanderjahre, wrote his own "mythical autobiography," putting his spiritual struggles and his ideas into the scrawlings of one Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. This personage is Professor of Dinge-in-Allgemeine at the University of Weissnichtwo. My mentor, emeritus of Lafayette College, knows all about my enthusiasm for this figure, because I wrote my senior honors thesis on how Carlyle's translation of Goethe influenced the devices which he then developed to transform his own experiences into those of Teufelsdröckh. This mentor has remarked that I have, at Evergreen, finally found my niche as Professor of Dinge-in-Allgemeine. Though my thoughts aren't as cogent as those of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, I can claim somewhat greater success as a teacher -- the poor Professor once announced that he was going to offer a series of lectures, but no one came. He spent the rest of his academic career jotting ideas onto scraps of paper, which he threw into large paper bags. (Ludwig, I'm not making this up. No one makes up things like this, save for a Scotsman infected by German Idealism.)

In closing, I include the greetings of my wife Lilo and of those colleagues who had the good fortune to meet you during your stay. The summer, though a busy one for Lilo and me, has been pleasant. My younger son and I have gone on a number of backpacking and tenting excursions to the Olympic Mountains and even to the Volcanic Monument of Mount St. Helens. Our garden, completely because of Lilo's work, has been beautiful, changing its array of colors every few weeks. We both wish that you could have enjoyed some of the beauty -- or at least sublimity -- of our landscape while you were here. It would also be such a pleasure to have you and your wife sitting with us over wine in our garden. Ah, well, perhaps sometime

Until you have occasion to make your comments on my translation of your monograph, I remain, cordially,

Your well-wishing colleague at Evergreen,

Charles B. Teske, Ph.D.
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