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Liberal Arts Education and the Modern University

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The nature of liberal arts education merits renewed attention and consideration, especially in the context of the modern university in both Hong Kong and mainland China, where there is growing recognition that quality education standards should be improved, and an interdisciplinary approach to education and research is the way forward. The liberal arts spirit is an illustration of the power of inspiration and transformation, and through engaging with different perspectives, students are enabled and encouraged to pursue independent study, which boosts their creativity and critical thinking. As a catalyst and facilitator, liberal arts education that encompasses fresh global perspectives and connections has proved its worth over the years. However, since it is sometimes easy to lose sight of some of the fundamental principles essential to university education, we need to realize that too little interaction between science and the humanities has widened the two-culture divide, and the question is how to reconcile, or better still combine, the two. The two-culture debate, although suffering neglect for a long time in China, is of profound relevance and implications for the modern university. It can be observed that participatory interaction inherent in the dynamism of pedagogical engagement is increasingly promoted as the preferred mode of teaching students, who have benefited from broad-based learning as the embodiment of liberal education. Overcoming rigid disciplinary exclusiveness is positively correlated with empowering students with broad knowledge and skills to succeed in the future.

1. Introduction

In recent years, higher education has undergone considerable development in Hong Kong as well as in mainland China. Despite controversy over its value and relevance to modern higher education, liberal arts education, with its steadfast commitment to whole person development, has played an increasingly prominent role in promoting all-round education reified in a learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. In the social and educational contexts of teaching, research and learning in Hong Kong and mainland China, the revitalization of liberal arts education is central to and at the heart of the increasing interdisciplinary interactions. A much-needed

examination of the idea of a renewed liberal arts education can enhance our understanding of the modern university in its mission to nurture creativity, foster innovation, promote active engagement, and train critical thinking in all its forms. And with its emphasis on students' learning needs, liberal arts education is well placed to prepare students for life in responding to real-world challenges.

2. Two Cultures

The nature of liberal arts education concerns the "two culture" divide and its primary function is to bridge this divide. China missed out on the two-culture debate of the 1960s. C.P. Snow's *Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* based on his Rede Lecture at Cambridge University in 1959 and the subsequent controversy it caused in the West failed to be noticed in the Chinese intellectual world. The first Chinese translation of the book was brought out in 1994 and did not provoke much response until the 2000s when belated attention to it sprang up in the context of Chinese universities aspiring to markedly improve undergraduate teaching. Nevertheless, the duration of the two-culture debate shows its great significance and enduring relevance to successive generations of educators. While scientists are often considered illiterate, Snow contends that the situation is equally lamentable when it comes to the knowledge non-scientists have about science.[1] Citing as a striking example the discoveries of 1957 Nobel Prize Winners Chen-Ning Yang and Tsung-Dao Lee at Columbia University, Snow conjectures that their work was far from sufficiently talked about at the High Table in Cambridge for lack of 'serious communication between the two cultures' (Ref. 1, p. 16). The deep rift between the two cultures indicates that there is hardly a place for them to meet (Ref. 1, p. 16). To a large extent, the mutual incomprehension and suspicion between scientists and humanists or 'literary intellectuals', to use Snow's term, still persist, which calls for a balanced curriculum to allow for 'an adequate education in both branches of knowledge'.[2]

In contrast to Leavis's caustic vituperation in response to Snow's 'two-culture' syndrome over half a century ago, *Darwin's Plots*, a 1983 book by another Cambridge scholar, Gillian Beer, has provided a positive and effective answer to the vexing issue of mutual incomprehension. By amply and convincingly demonstrating how deeply science influenced nineteenth-century literature, her study has exemplarily dismantled and bridged the two-culture divide. After all, the knowledge gap does not seem to be unbridgeable, as is shown by Beer. In fact, the British Society for Literature and Science endeavours to promote 'interdisciplinary research into the relationships of science and literature in all periods'.[3] Some decades earlier, William Empson, who was first a Cambridge mathematics student and then switched to English, 'use[d] concepts of projective geometry in a self-reflexive conceit [...]'.[4] In recent years, there have been unmistakable signs that scientific literacy has improved considerably. In the digital age, computer literacy skills can almost be taken for granted and humanists have benefited enormously from digital archives that constitute a powerful tool for research. Similarly, computational technologies are

required for corpus design, which has enriched the humanities landscape. Computer and IT support are indispensable on any university campus today.

A balance between the two cultures is vitally important, and should be generally attainable. The history of Chinese higher education is embarrassingly short. Prior to the establishment of a credible higher education system, there existed only small-scale private schools to train scholars to prepare for imperial examinations, the gateway to becoming officials. Science subjects were rarely taught, at least not in a formal, systematic way. The Westernization Movement, also called the Self-Strengthening Movement, which started in the 1860s during the late Qing dynasty, signified the harrowing realization of the backwardness of China's science and technology. The perceived superiority of its own culture gave way to the urgent need to introduce modern Western technology. Significantly, this preceded the founding, by American missionaries, of the first university in China, St. John's University. A fully-fledged curriculum was offered at the university level in 1892, and the subjects taught included theology and Western learning. Science and technology, however, did not feature prominently in its curriculum. In 1895, Peiyang Western Study College was founded in Tianjin with Emperor Guangxu's approval. It was later renamed Tianjin University, aiming to equip its students with new scientific and technological knowledge.

As the embodiment of traditional Chinese culture, Confucianism was once at the core of traditional Chinese education. However, starting from the late nineteenth century, it came under severe attack. The 1919 May Fourth Movement initiated by the students of Peking University ardently advocated its overthrow, as it was regarded as an impediment to the advancement of science and democracy. Without any doubt, science was given top priority. In the 1920s and 1930s, many young Chinese people had great faith in the value of science, and the rallying cry was 'saving the country through science'. Since then, many Chinese students have developed a strong interest in pursuing science subjects, culminating in a nationwide craze in the 1980s when the catchphrase was that if you master maths, physics and chemistry, you have nothing to fear wherever you go. One serious upshot was the conspicuous neglect of the humanities in the whole country, while the culture of science dominated. For generations, most Chinese scientists have been strictly scientists, not even remotely resembling what the old-fashioned term, 'natural philosophers', might imply.

Chinese scientists may well lack knowledge of the humanities and culture, and it is all very well to say that science should be 'humanized', and scientists more cultured, but what about the humanists? Should they be scientifically literate as well? In terms of an all-round education, it is increasingly felt that science cannot be left out. Alistair Miller summarizes the two-culture debate by way of a question: 'What are the relative merits of literature and science in cultivating a person and educating him for modern life?'[5] But, to be sure, this is not an either/or choice. Regardless of their discipline, students need to be cultivated, humanized and above all, encouraged all along. A liberal education can indeed be a good answer. By combining the two cultures, students can benefit through a relatively broad, well-balanced curriculum. A liberal

arts education does not preclude specialist training. Students still specialize in different areas of academic study, including science subjects. This is particularly so in American liberal arts colleges. Considering that the future jobs of students may be dichotomized as specialists or generalists, there should be ample space for individual development. This article is not meant to discuss generalists versus specialists; what must be emphasized is the importance to cultivate the pursuit of lifelong learning. In order to help students keep in step with today's rapidly changing world, a liberal education creates opportunities on campus for them to develop new skills and, more importantly, through a broad basis of knowledge that provides a clear map for the future, they are trained to learn how to acquire new knowledge after graduation.

3. College Chinese

In 1978, Kuang Yaming, the then president of Nanjing University in China, acutely aware of the overwhelming lack of cultural literacy, suggested that a course be designed for all university students in the whole country known as 'daxue yuwen' (college Chinese). It had come to his notice that science students could not even write letters and articles properly, and even their basic linguistic proficiency was questionable.[6] In fact, the course was designed not only for science students but also for humanities students. The Chinese word 'yuwen' literally means language and literature. Language can never be separated from the cultural context in which it is used. According to Kuang, College Chinese should reach beyond the realm of language and literature, and he spelled out what he had in mind: 'College Chinese' contains literature, history, philosophy, economics, politics and other related disciplines. He was adamant that two objectives should be achieved for students taking this course. One of them is to introduce students to the basic skills fundamental to competent writing. They are also helped to be able to read classical Chinese, which eludes most Chinese these days. And the other objective is to highlight cultural cultivation, including moral development and character education.[6]

College Chinese is of profound historical significance in its simple yet vital endeavour to address the two-culture divide in training undergraduate students in China. It has proved to be a milestone in the history of higher education in modern China, and is still loaded with pedagogical resonance today. Its enduring relevance should not be underestimated in view of its function to broaden the awareness and understanding of humanist education. However, College Chinese seems to be under threat of being marginalized because the course may be too ambitious for its own good. College Chinese has turned out to be too elementary for most humanities students, but it still attracts science students, especially at engineering universities such as Beijing Institute of Technology.[7] Clearly, the changed circumstances call for a rethinking and re-evaluation of the underlying principles of College Chinese.

Meanwhile, it has been pointed out repeatedly that scientific literacy, as in the capacity to use scientific knowledge, is continuously lacking too. To address the

generally low scientific literacy in China, *The Outline of the National Scheme for Scientific Literacy* was issued in 2006. It states that:

> Scientific literacy is an important component of public literacy, reflected in the need to understand science and technology, master basic scientific methods, build up scientific thoughts, and gain the ability to apply these to practical problems.[8]

On all accounts, this is a very ambitious scheme considering the massive population of the country. The general public opinion is that a low level of scientific literacy is potentially detrimental to societal development and growth, which generates the appeal for universities to contribute more substantially to producing students with sound scientific knowledge.

Renmin University of China, once a famous humanities university, has expanded into the fields of science and technology, aiming to create interdisciplinarity between humanities and science by establishing departments of physics, chemistry and environmental science, the profound significance of which has been shown in building an academic environment in which students of different disciplines can thrive. The way of thinking is seen to have changed in a general way as well, which shows the university's commitment to innovative thinking to develop in line with societal needs and expectations so that a more balanced and holistic approach to education can be achieved.[9] The practice of Renmin University is a reflection of the positive thinking on how to enhance learning by broadening understanding of the perceptions of university education across the country.

In parallel to College Chinese, we might take a cursory look at College English at Chinese universities and colleges. As the most influential language in the world, English is understandably the most popular second language in China. In Hong Kong, due to its cosmopolitan character and, more importantly, also due to a manifest need to prepare students for an international job market, the official language of instruction is English at all universities except in Chinese departments and for some special courses. At Lingnan University, English has long been an integral part of liberal arts education. Enviably extensive exchange programmes have been established with universities all over the world in order to give students some international experience and fresh perspectives to broaden and deepen their learning by engaging with each other. In equal measure, English is essential for Hong Kong students going overseas and for international students coming to Lingnan. A number of prestigious universities in mainland China have started similar programmes, albeit at a much smaller scale at this stage. It is no exaggeration to say that learning English well is a life changer. Many Chinese students have studied overseas since the opening up policy in the late 1970s. And a large number of them have returned to China with new knowledge and sophisticated modern concepts, including the very notion of liberal education. Consequently, what has emerged out of this is a better interface and interaction with the world.

4. The Role of Liberal Education

If insight into the nature of both the cultures of science and the humanities, which are supposed to be incommensurable, is deemed important, it is time to take a fresh look

at the value and importance of a broad-based liberal education which, typically associated with America, is commanding increasing attention in many parts of the world. In the UK, for instance, the University of Warwick has specifically designed a liberal arts degree. Some other UK institutions have launched similar programmes in recent years.[10] In Hong Kong, Lingnan University, where I taught until recently, boasts the only liberal arts curriculum in the territory. By creating a congenial campus climate, the University seeks to empower and transform its students in preparation for future real life challenges. There is a specific reason for the University to position itself as a liberal arts institution in Hong Kong. Unlike its American counterparts, Lingnan is a public-funded university, without massive endowment from private sources. Many of its students are from low-income families. Despite many practical difficulties, Lingnan has not wavered from its commitment to providing a liberal arts education on the grounds that it can best serve the interest of students who benefit from being able to maximize their potential.

Liberal arts education is defined somewhat liberally in different geo-locations and for a good reason. The term of liberal arts education has a long history, but is a relatively unfamiliar concept in China. And a comparison of the different Chinese translations of liberal arts education in different places and at different times reveals how it is (or was) perceived. In mainland China, the term was first translated as 'suzhijiaoyu', whose literal translation is quality education. Yet this can be misleading; a more accurate version would be quality-oriented education or education for all-round development. In Taiwan, it is 'tongshi jiaoyu', general education, which is also misleading for this should not be equated with liberal arts education.

It is important to draw a distinction between general education and liberal arts education, and they should be two different terms. To be sure, a whole person education, as in 'all-round' education, is a more than general education.[11] The latter is more about broader learning and variety. In Hong Kong, the translation of liberal arts education is 'boya jiaoyu', originating from Lingnan University, and this translation has a classical bent in Chinese tradition, meaning great learning for 'bo', and good conduct for 'ya'. And this term has gained currency in mainland China and become the standard translation. This translation involves interpretation, and it indicates how this term is understood and meant to be conveyed to a different audience. Further, the way the term is translated and received also indicates how it has been re-contextualized in a different cultural tradition and setting.

In this regard, it can be said that a broad-based education may provide an answer to how to navigate today's uncertain terrain as a necessary preparation for the future job market and beyond. Eboo Patel describes some of the distinctive features of a liberal arts education:

> The hallmarks of a liberal education – building an ethical foundation that values the well-being of others, strengthening the mental muscles that allow you to acquire new knowledge quickly, and developing the skills to apply it effectively in rapidly shifting contexts – are not luxuries but necessities for preparing professionals for the coming transformation of knowledge work to relationship work.[12]

Knowledge comes and goes, and to be prepared to be able to acquire new knowledge is of crucial long-term importance. A liberal education is all about personal enrichment and resourcefulness for a rapidly changing world. To this end, it is essential to foster and nurture creativity and critical thinking, along with empathy and active engagement. To face any future challenge, students must be trained to be both resilient and adaptable to competition and changing circumstances.

How to conceptualize the ideal of liberal arts education in the context of Hong Kong is a key question. Lingnan University started the practice of liberal education more than 20 years ago, and its success has inspired other institutions well beyond the territory – many universities up and down mainland China have begun to see and also to promote the value and importance of liberal education. Lingnan is still relentlessly experimenting with innovative approaches by working out detailed and multifaceted strategies so as to constantly improve the quality of its liberal education. For the sake of realizing its value, priority needs to be given to teaching and learning. Student admission precedes their commitment to a major. During this process, they are allowed maximum flexibility with sufficient space to construct a learning model that meets their diverse and specific needs. A hybrid admission model has been in place since 2016 and is called the Interdisciplinary Major in Chinese Literature, History and Philosophy. By introducing a variety of disciplinary perspectives, students are better able to study the complexity, diversity, and incessant change associated with the real world. Moreover, outstanding students are given the opportunity to embark on a unique combination of courses with the help of a supervisor, called the student-designed major, which is better adapted to their specific needs and personalized teaching practice.

Meanwhile, it is a matter of increasing urgency to address the issue of students' science literacy. Michael S. Roth warns of two dangers: 'danger of narrowing specialization' and 'danger of populist parochialism'.[13] There is no doubt that science should be a core component of a liberal arts education. The absence of science in the liberal education curriculum at Lingnan created some obvious gaps which were left unfilled until quite recently. In 2014, a science unit was established and public lectures as well as courses in science subjects were offered to all undergraduate students across the university. In addition, a data science programme will be launched. With digital humanities playing an increasingly central role, students have actively engaged in a variety of digital humanities projects, involving the application of computers to humanities, social sciences and business studies. And digital cultural studies including audio and video interviews, photographs related to archival material, and so on will be integrated soon into the curriculum.

In the current context of globalization, liberal education is also seen as cosmopolitan education. Lingnan has extensive exchange programmes with international universities, particularly liberal arts institutions in the US, to enable students with different cultural backgrounds to be able to access experiential learning, which leads to whole-person formation and a free-thinking citizenry. With their visions being thus broadened, it is possible for students to achieve continuous personal enrichment through a broad and solid foundation established in relation to a wide range of

cross-disciplinary subjects approached from fresh perspectives. In a general sense, to liberate students is precisely what liberal education aims to achieve. However, despite its patent value, liberal education has been decried and its value questioned. As pointed out by Michael Roth,[13] 'This is a fragile time for liberal education, making commitment to it all the more urgent'. It can be argued and demonstrated through compelling evidence that liberal education changes individual lives and society as a whole. What is encouraging is that the practice of liberal education has produced practical implications for Hong Kong, mainland China and Asia: there are considerable ramifications of liberal education in a growing number of universities in this region. And initiated by Lingnan University, liberal education has galvanized a powerful alliance of liberal arts institutions in Asia.

5. The Modern University

The broad trajectory of modern universities in China has been characterized by some drastic changes in organizing academic disciplines. As indicated earlier, all Chinese universities are 'modern' in a temporal sense. Some of the most influential missionary universities, founded and supported by American churches, adopted European and American models, particularly the latter ones. At the same time, a number of state-run universities also rose to prominence. Even the Japanese invasion that forced many universities to move inland did not strangle higher education in China. As a miracle, the three universities, including Peking University, which fled to Kunming to form an alliance of Southwest Associated University, produced an amazing number of scholars and scientists, including the two Nobel laureates mentioned earlier, Chen-Ning Yang and Tsung-Dao Lee, who were undergraduate students at the time. Incidentally, William Empson was a teacher there for two out of the nine years' exile of the University. As recalled by one of his students, he typed out the entire text of *Othello* from memory. It was then mimeographed as a textbook.[14] Despite extreme poverty, and thanks to a balanced and well-structured curriculum, students thrived and the university created a lasting legacy in higher education in modern China. It was in a free academic atmosphere that students such as Yang and Lee could flourish and develop their full potential.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, due to a desperate shortage of university graduates with specialized knowledge, the Soviet model of higher education was introduced in 1952 when the whole university system was revamped. Universities were divided into two categories: the so-called 'comprehensive' universities and specialized, especially technical/engineering, institutes and colleges. Yet comprehensive universities were something of a misnomer, given that they were stripped to the bone: only a paucity of humanities disciplines were left. Some of the most prestigious universities suffered violent mutilation. One striking example is Nanjing University, formally National Central University, which used to consist of seven colleges with 37 departments and 26 research institutes. After the regrouping or 'adjustment' – which was the term used – only 13 departments were kept within the university, which lost – just to name a few – the departments of philosophy,

economics, law and political science, some of which became independent institutes or were just eliminated. There was no chance for the department of philosophy to survive in many universities.[15]

As a result, one culture flourished at the expense of the other, namely, while science – or rather, engineering – was allowed to succeed, the humanities could barely survive. But it was primarily students – regardless of their disciplines – who were victimized and their learning initiatives, personal interest and individual development severely curtailed. Deprived of opportunities to develop into whole persons, many engineering graduates, although highly respected by society, eventually turned into dull nerds. Humanities graduates were no better because they found themselves almost worthless. Scientific triumphalism was due not only to its practical value but also to its relative political safeness. Circumscribed by a narrowly specialized curriculum, students practically had no access to elective courses outside their majors or core disciplines. Universities were not given the autonomy to decide on what to teach. All institutions were organized together to devise uniform teaching plans and Soviet textbooks or teaching materials were used across the country. Under such stifling circumstances, it is not difficult to imagine that any liberal arts programme would be branded as promoting Western bourgeois values and thus had to be strictly prohibited.

In recent years, however, the pendulum has swung back, marking a resurgence of enthusiasm for the American model of higher education by going comprehensive again. In the 1980s, after China gradually recovered from the Cultural Revolution, universities began to restore departments that had been dismantled or lost to other colleges. In the subsequent decades, going comprehensive fast became a fashion. Many specialized colleges or institutes – for instance, agricultural colleges – either expanded by incorporating disciplines of humanities and social sciences or merged into other larger comprehensive universities. South China Agricultural University used to be an agricultural college and now has its own law school and department of philosophy! It became increasingly clear that the rift between the two cultures was positively inimical to learning, teaching and research. Meanwhile, as a result of the belated realization of the value of all-round education, the complete breakdown of the liberal arts tradition finally began to be rectified, but at what a price. Nonetheless, the resilience of China is demonstrated by the fact that its higher education is experiencing qualitative improvement and some of its top universities are ambitious to become world class institutions. Interestingly, it can be observed that the loftier their goals, the more eager these universities are to embrace the concept and practice of liberal education.[16] And it is precisely for this reason that nothing can impede the reconciliation between science and humanities since an overwhelming number of institutions have seen a mutually beneficial prospect that has already become a reality in some tangible ways.

So, can we still say liberal education with its emphasis on general education is an anachronism? Hardly. As discussed earlier, its benefits should not be difficult to grasp. The Chinese higher education educators have learned a profound lesson in a costly way, and have begun to feel enlightened, and indeed empowered, by embracing

the revitalization of liberal education. There is a growing realization that a skills-based education is not enough for the modern world and technical skills should not be allowed to eclipse the arts and humanities.

A decade ago, Matthew Goldstein, the then chancellor of The City University of New York (CUNY), who had a science background, wrote about the value and function of liberal education:

> A liberal education is critical to our ability to make connections across disciplines, across centuries, across communities. It stimulates independent thinking and a lifelong love of inquiry and knowledge. It encourages an appreciation of human endeavors and natural phenomena and an abiding devotion to the spirit of discovery and preservation.[17]

This statement makes a special case for liberal education that is not fundamentally dissimilar to general education, which is, if a distinction is to be made, related more specifically to introducing students to a variety of disciplines to address their dearth of general knowledge. A liberal education nurtures critical thinking and also 'mak[ing] connections across disciplines'.[17] In short, students are trained to solve problems, not just to identify them.

To this end, and more specifically, for a liberal arts education, according to Goldstein, it should be 'a hands-on pursuit', making wide-ranging connections 'through technology, travel, and work experiences'.[17] Goldstein's compelling argument captures the quintessential spirit of liberal education and can also be seen as a neat account of the practice at CUNY, which closely coincides with how liberal education is delivered at Lingnan University. The forerunner of this university was a missionary university in Guangzhou, which was shut down, together with all other similar institutions, in 1952. In 1967, it was re-established in Hong Kong. There is a historical reason for why the university chose liberal arts education as its mission. In this respect, both its history and role in promoting liberal arts education are inspirational. As noted earlier, enthralled by the value of liberal education, many universities in mainland China are beginning to emulate the enlightened exemplars to be found in some of the best liberal arts universities in Asia and America. They all pursue the explicit learning goals of critical thinking and effective communication, as well as forming a free-thinking citizenry embodied in the word 'liberal', which is based on 'liber', whose Latin root means 'free'. Students benefit from the great diversity and richness of liberal education.

A recent report in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* affords an illuminating example of Chinese universities embracing world literature. Birmingham University's Shakespeare Institute at Stratford-upon-Avon joined hands with Nanjing University in collaboration with the Phoenix Publishing & Media Group, a leading publisher of Western literature in Chinese translation, based in Nanjing. The Shakespeare Centre was established under the auspices of the Institute of Advanced Studies of Nanjing University. Notably, the newly established Centre aims not only to promote research into and the translation of Shakespeare's plays, but also to foster a broader understanding of his art in connection with its adaptation, performance and dialogue.

According to the agreement, Birmingham University will send its teaching staff to Nanjing to teach a series of introductory courses to the students 'in fields for which the university is well known, such as stem cell biology, energy storage and gravitational wave physics'.[18] In addition, another agreement was signed for Birmingham academics to lecture on popular science and their lectures will be published as general education textbooks.[19]

6. Conclusion

In some interesting and important ways, the evolution of Chinese universities is linked with the rejuvenation of liberal arts education, first in Hong Kong and then in some parts of mainland China, which underpins development and societal progress. The trajectory of liberal arts education has been a haphazard one, which is an oblique reflection of the ups and downs of the universities both in Hong Kong and mainland China. Until now, the hubristic stance of science towards the humanities in China has been largely relinquished. Mutual mistrust between scientists and humanities scholars has been reduced progressively. Science and humanities do not have to be estranged. A lack of humanities in science departments is becoming much less severe, thanks to the introduction of general education courses at many universities. It is not so meaningful to talk about the relative merits of science training and humanities training in antithetical or irreconcilable terms. The overriding priority is to address the lingering state of disconnectedness with regard to the two cultures. The encouraging sign is that after being released from the shackles of the Soviet model in the past, modern Chinese universities have moved towards not only multidisciplinary but also interdisciplinary approaches to research and teaching.

At the same time, liberal arts education has emerged globally as a natural response to the two-culture divide and to the shifting challenges of a rapidly changing world. The ongoing conflict between science and humanities often displays a seemingly unresolvable tension, which is of course unnecessary because it is not necessarily unresolvable. And the best way to address the prevailing imbalance between science and humanities is through dialogue and interaction. Dialogue between science and humanities is akin to dialogue between mind and nature. With liberal arts education underpinning such a dialogue or even collaboration in the process of nurturing young students, the two cultures are given a good chance not only to complement but also to strengthen one another. They can, and sometimes do, come together in harmony to better advance human prosperity.

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