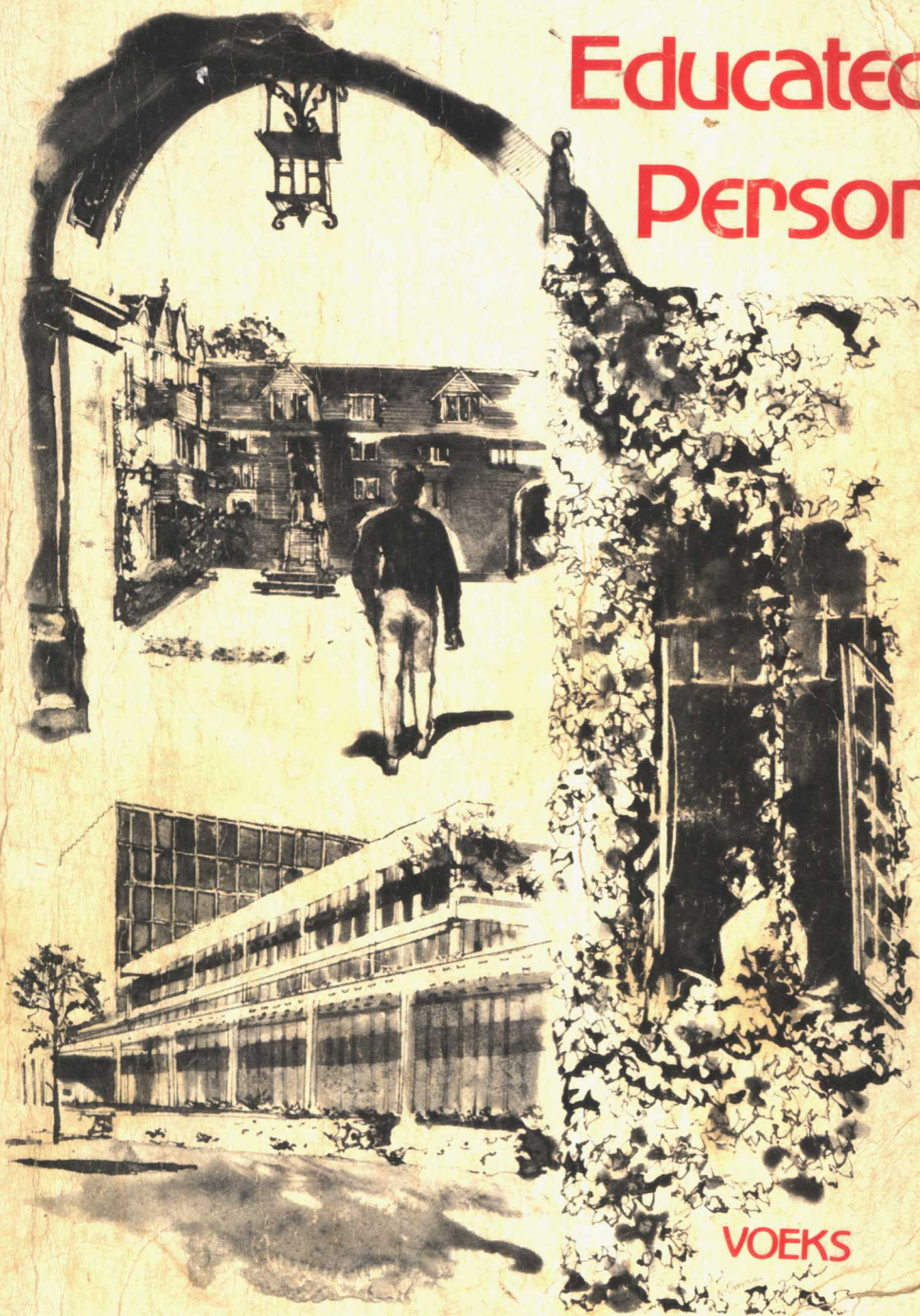


On Becoming an Educated Person



VOEKS

AN ORIENTATION TO COLLEGE AND LIFE

On Becoming an Educated Person

AN ORIENTATION TO COLLEGE AND LIFE

VIRGINIA VOEKS

San Diego State University

Fourth Edition



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Preface

EDUCATION FOR LIFE

Most of us wish to grow, but are not at all sure how to do so. Sometimes our attempts actually make matters worse. Most of us yearn for a more vibrant life, but have little or no idea how to create such living. vibrant 兴奋的, 活跃的.

New worlds open daily to the wondering delight of those eager to learn and grow. Wherever you are, old delights are built upon and thereby expand to encompass more and more of the life around. Old questions get answered, and new questions arise, inviting your exploration and imaginative attention. Some problems fade; some are solved or dismissed; new problems approach and intrigue you. Daily your imagination is challenged. Your fund of information constantly used constantly grows. Skills in thinking, perceiving, integrating, interpreting, refined through your use become ever more usable. These are some signs of a person awake and growing.

This book is written to help you achieve those goals—in formal education and in the rest of your life.

The book has three uses: for identifying and clarifying your goals; for identifying trouble spots—what exactly is going wrong and what can you do about it; for developing your skill in reading, listening, coping with examinations and other trying crises. Your skill in reasoning, seeing more clearly, understanding, learning, and remembering. It will stand you in good stead throughout college and university, but not only that. 在需要时对你有帮助.

This book is intended for all of life, not merely the academic. The material is useful for anyone trying to grow. It can help you learn more swiftly and well, whether in classrooms or in outside life. It can help you live more joyously.

Viii Preface

Robert Ellis wrote a vital section on creativity (Chapter 1, C, 6) and another on combatting tension, developing ability to relax (Chapter 5, E, 6), as well as some of the paragraphs on views of college, thrill seeking, and other topics. He also prepared for you an exercise to ease anxiety and help you toward serenity and inner peace. It is the Addendum, after the last chapter. → clear and calm 清晰 平静

Pointers on effective discussions (Chapter 3, B, 1 through 8) and the uses of additional languages (Chapter 3, D, 2) were prepared for you by my husband, William McBlair. His insight, love for and knowledge of students, and wisdom shine through this book. He helped in countless ways. 智慧 睿智

To Paul Streeter you also have cause for gratitude. His advice solved many problems. His sensitive, perceptive editing of the manuscript gave dozens of improvements to clarity and grace. 感谢 洞察力 修改 优雅

Alison Sweeney created the delightful photographs which illumine words, adding so much vitality and beauty to this edition. We are fortunate too for the encouragement, imagination, and artistic taste given this project by Mary Jane and Kent R. Willson. Kent R. Willson also is responsible for the singularly clear graphs.

Duane Sturges has compiled an excellent index to enable you to find quickly any topic of especial concern to you. There also is a table of contents which can act as a summary of each chapter or as a preview.

Many thanks to Dad and Mother for their inspiration and tender encouragement, to Antoinette Crane for beautiful final typing, and to Tracy Ann Wilder who, with accuracy and sweet patience, alphabetized, pasted, proofed, ran errands, typed, and offered lovely ideas.

All join me in wishing you well. We hope very much our endeavors aid your endeavors and you become ever more nearly the person you most want to be.

effort, attempt

VIRGINIA VOEKS
San Diego, California

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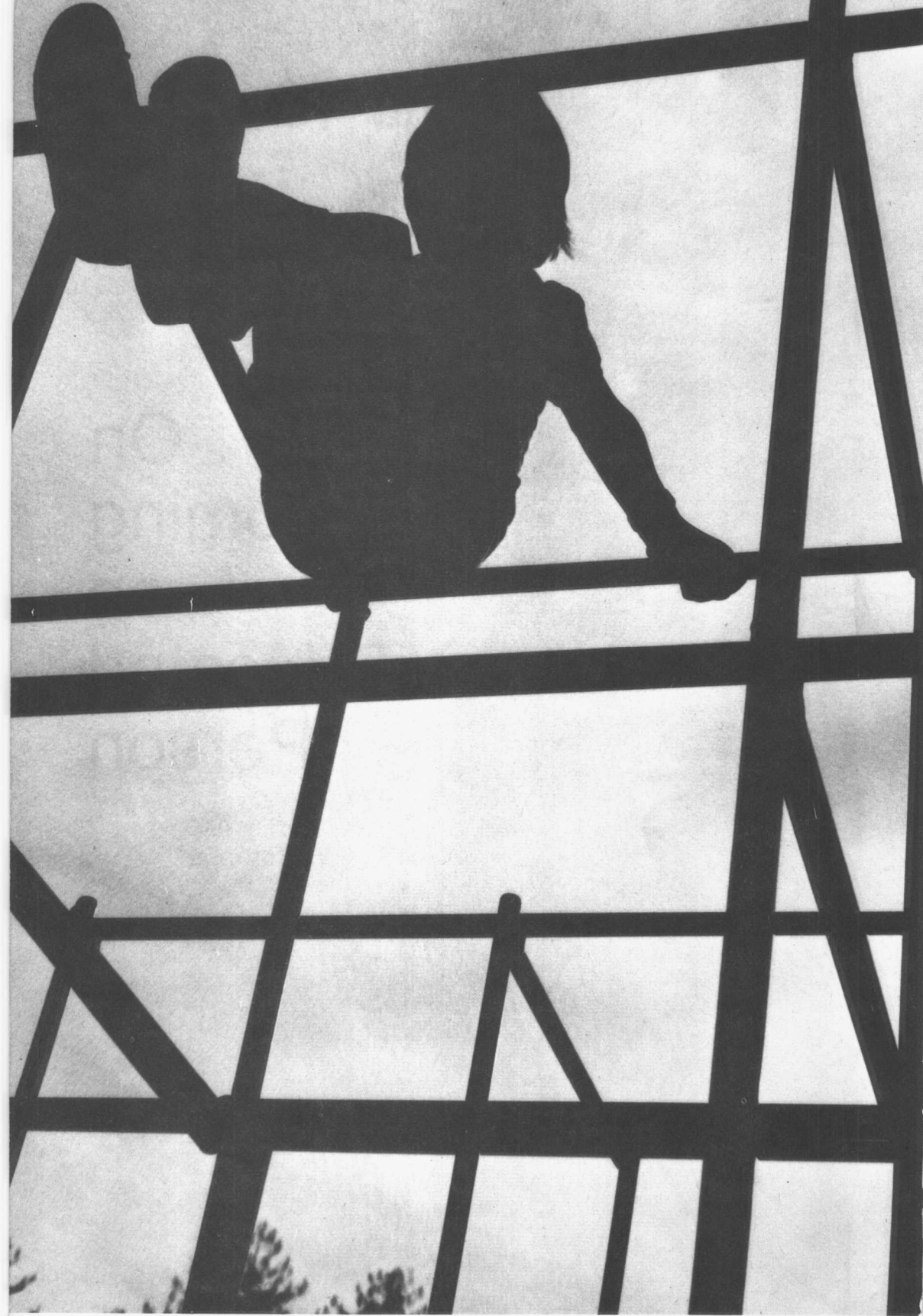
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On
Becoming
an
Educated
Person



Launch yourself with vigor . . .

Chapter 1

Why Go to University or College?

A. EDUCATION AND LIFE

The university has become, for many of its students and graduates, a shattered dream. No doubt you have encountered persons bitter about their college experience. This disillusionment, however, is not new; H. G. Wells highlighted it in a novel almost forty years ago. He noted that universities are concerned, in the minds of many, with "... 'imparting some sort of ultimate wisdom and mental habits unknown to the commonality, initiating them into a mastery of life. . . .

"Initiation. That is what you thought they were going to do for you. . . . That is what our poor befuddled, humbugged lower classes believe goes on up here to this day. They really believe that people who have been up here are mentally better than people who haven't. You cannot believe what they imagine! Education — at a University. Excelsior, and there is nothing higher. They look up to it with their mouths open. Crumbs fall to them. University Extension! Oh, generous, beautiful words! You, Stella, were to be one of those precious educated. The concentrated sort, not the extended sort. And now after two years you find

4 Why Go to University or College?

you have got nothing whatever, nothing that makes you different, or stronger, or better, Eh?’

“‘That is what I’m telling you,’ said Stella.”⁵³

So it goes — the current tragicomedy played by college students and their professors. The major difference between Stella and many other college students is that Stella awakened after two years. Many awaken only after four, or not at all. Every spring, thousands upon thousands of black-robed figures docilely line up, parade down an aisle, take their sheepskins, and walk to their seats again, often with quizzical, sardonic smiles. To many of them college has been a farce — and a rather humorless farce at that.

Yet, in that same line are other students — radiantly afire with exciting discoveries and deeply serene with new resources. There are students who feel they have had experiences of great value, experiences of greater value than could be communicated well in any language (designed, as languages are, to convey best only the prosaic).

And you? In which group will you be walking when you graduate?

You rather hope, of course, that it will be the latter group. But hopes are not enough. Songs and folklore notwithstanding, wishing does not make it so — not even very intense wishing.

Why is it, then, that some who come to higher education leave with so much, while others grow bitter and leave with so little?

What differentiates these two groups? They do not differ in intelligence one way or the other;^{27, 38} they do not differ in background preparation nor in the major they choose.^{21-23, 44, 49} They do differ in approach.^{28, 38}

Some students approach college and the university as parallel to a fast-food drive-in: Education is to be like a dinner already prepared, packaged, “pipin’ hot,” ready to be consumed on the spot. Their job is to receive it. These students view education as a product, a thing, not as a process for becoming a different person.

A variation with similarly bleak consequences is that the university is some sort of way station which must be endured for several years before getting on with life. Those adopting this belief imagine college and the university to be modern equivalents to initiation or the manhood rites of a primitive society. Accordingly, they suggest to one and all that anybody who does more than the minimum necessary to navigate the graduation hurdles (“tests of manhood,” in

their view) is a fool, or an idealist, or worse.

This modern but cynical approach is ultimately self-defeating. A college degree may get you in the front door for your first job interview, and maybe your first job, but what about the rest of your life? You have to start building your life sometime; why not now? At college and the university all sorts of options and opportunities are available; here you are allowed to grow and experiment with only minimal negative consequences if you flounder and change your mind.

You can join this group: These students approach their college as akin to a large, diverse, and somewhat wild garden. They see it as a place where common and uncommon ingredients can be collected by them and by them combined into new and sometimes exotic dishes; it is a place where they can learn the skills and facts and arts for building the traditional and creating the new.

That captures the difference between the bitter and the joyous. One group approaches knowledge passively; waits to be taught; and finds the taste flat, musty, old, reminiscent of cardboard. The other group actively attacks learning and finds it is delightful and satisfying. So we see, the outcome of college depends largely on you — your perspective, beliefs, and approach.

Unfortunately it is not a simple case of hitching up your resolve and becoming an educated person. You must recognize that the university, despite many claims, is not a modern assembly line nor a guarantee of anything. It is a set of opportunities. You can get as much or as little as you desire, but you must get it yourself.

Let us see how you can guarantee results you will value.

e

B. YOUR GOALS

To solve any problem, the wisest start is to carefully answer this question: What precisely am I trying to do? Where do I want to get? The probability of ever reaching a desired goal is increased greatly by knowing precisely what you are trying to achieve. So also is your efficiency. Efficiency always increases when you answer first "What am I trying to do?" and only then ask "How can I do it?"

The point seems obvious, almost like common sense. And yet, how many times have you searched for solutions

efficient.

李在通
能力