

Engaging Universities with Big Questions

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What big questions

- do people ask at your university?
- in your research field?
- should people be asking?
- What are the big issues on campus?
(social, political, environmental,
discrimination, ...?)

Examples

- How does one go from microeconomics to macroeconomics?
- How does one go from genotype to phenotype?
- What is the relationship between human agency and social structures?
- How do diseases spread and what are the best strategies to contain them?
- What are effective strategies to alleviate poverty?
- What is the quantum theory of gravity?
- What is the nature of consciousness?

Comment at
condensedconcepts.blogspot.com

- Will the quintessential academic return and replace the managerial one?
- Will academics return to discussing an entire paper in terms of quality rather than getting obsessed with metrics of a paper?

The large numbers of younger faculty competing for a professorship feel forced **to specialize in narrow areas of their discipline** and to publish as many papers as possible during the five to ten years before a tenure decision is made. Unfortunately, **most of the facts in these reports have neither practical utility nor theoretical significance**; they are tiny stones looking for a place in a cathedral. The majority of 'empirical facts' in the social sciences have a half-life of about ten years.

Jerome Kagan, *The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Humanities in the 21st Century*

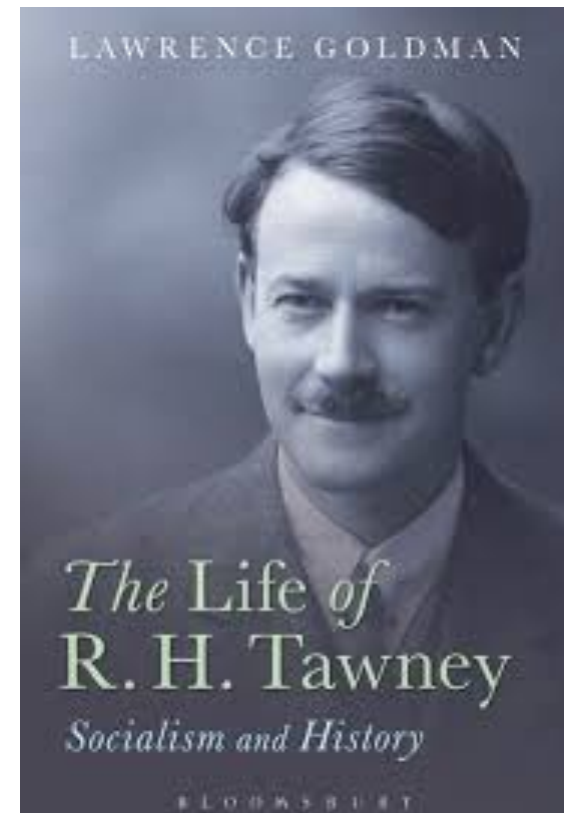
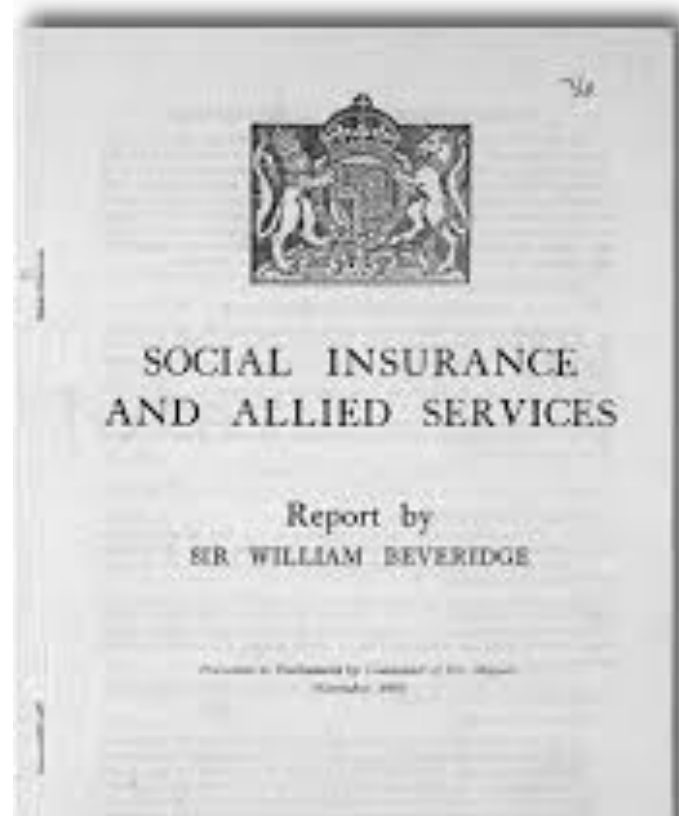
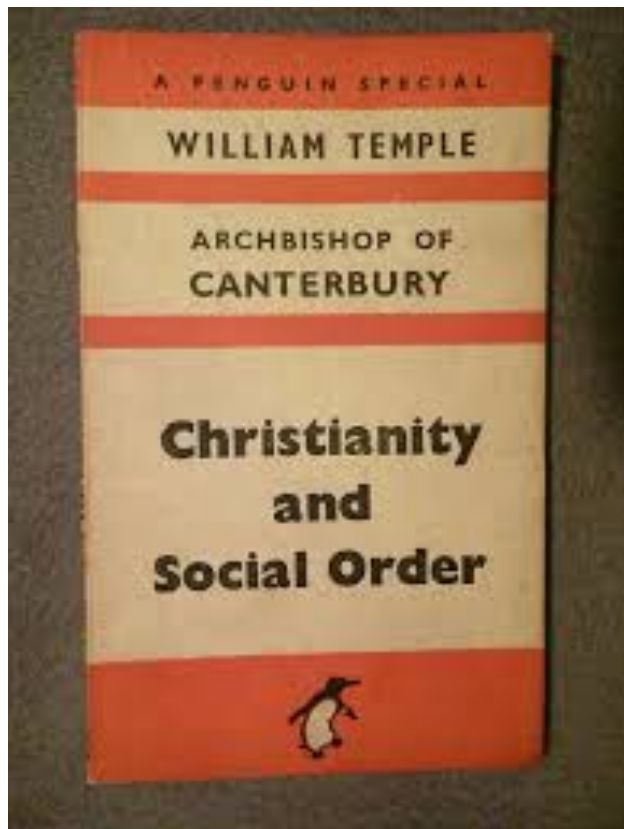
I feel quite confident that MacIntyre learned to put the matter this way by serving on **the Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure Committee of Duke University**. I am confident that this is the source of his understanding of the increasing subdisciplinary character of fields, because I also served on that committee for seven years. During that time I observed people becoming “leaders” in their fields by making their work so narrow that the “field” consisted of no more than five or six people. **We would often hear from the chairs of the departments that they could not understand what the person was doing, but they were sure the person to be considered for tenure was the best “in his or her field.”**

Stanley Hauerwas, *The State of the University*, page 49, (2008).

1900: Why is there so much poverty in Britain?

Edward Cairn asked 3 students at Oxford

William Temple, William Beveridge, R.H. Tawney



International Fellowship of Evangelical Students

- More than 160 national movements
- About 500,000 students

- Engaging the whole university
- Faculty and Ph.D student Track at 2015 World Assembly
- Facebook group
- Email listserve



Sample IFES Engage activities

- Draft and Write conferences in Australia
- Passion talks in San Francisco
- Intensive Summer Study in Delhi
- Project Gratitude, Singapore