Noted academician examined
Various fields in search of truth

By EVELYN EISEN

"Life refuses to be embalmed alive," British scientist-philosopher, educator Alfred North Whitehead once commented, "and the universe is a museum with its specimens in glass cases."

The Meaning of Life

The man after whom BC's newest academic building is named felt the necessity of adjusting the constant changes that take place in our institutions of learning to our current beliefs and needs. We also should not, he felt, accept the total "mass of fables termed history" without evaluating its value and relevance to our lives. In many cases, especially in the field of science, the past was a stage of mistakes and revisions of mistakes, according to Dr. Whitehead.

He also maintained that all philosophers asked the same simple question, "What is it all about?" To this, Dr. Whitehead stated, "After all, it is the blunt truth that we want. All the rest is addition, however important, to this foundation."

He observed that it was at the college and university level that there existed the greatest need for a clarified attitude toward what should be taught as the truth, and how this learning should be integrated with experience. He recognized that the university was "entrusted with the education of the future," as the place where men should be introduced to the world, not sheltered from its realities.

The stifling of the "contagious disease of imagination," coupled with the tedious memorization of precise knowledge, which was never truly understood, in Dr. Whitehead's opinion clouded the unity and interconnection of all areas of education.

"Murdur Will Out"

"Your learning is useless to you," he explained, "until you have lost your textbooks, burnt your lecture notes and forgotten the details which you learned by heart for the examination." He maintained that the great English universities, under whose direction students examine plays of Shakespeare to the detriment of their enjoyment, should be "prosecuted for soul murder."

"To this day," he once said in an Atlantic Monthly article, "I cannot read King Lear, having had the advantage of studying it accurately at school."

Dr. Whitehead's awareness of the importance of a living and vital scheme of learning began early in his life, when he was born in Cambridge, England, in 1861 and received training "to serve God and state" at the Bluehouse School in Southwest England. He attended Cambridge University as a student and Fellow from 1889 to 1910.

A Broad Mind

In London, he became a professor at the Imperial College of Science, then dean of the Faculty of Science and finally chairman of the Academic Council. His duties for the latter position entitled the administration of the internal affairs of London education. He was appointed professor of philosophy at Harvard in 1924 and later was named Professor Emeritus there. Dr. Whitehead died in 1947.

Dr. Whitehead's exposition of the meaning and implication of the ideas and theories contained in his many books and articles continually stressed the importance of looking beyond the obvious, "Human nature," he stated, "loses its most precious quality when it is robbed of its sense of things beyond, unexplored and yet insolent." Yet, our overlooking the significance of those things closest to us caused him to comment that, "It requires a very unusual mind to undertake the analysis of the obvious."

For Dr. Whitehead, "Philosophy began in wonder. And when philosophy thought had done its best, the wonder still remained."

BC social science building
Opens after six years of effort

By JUDY SOLOW

Over the site of what was formerly the sunken garden has risen Alfred North Whitehead Hall, the newest plant of learning on the BC campus.

In the Beginning

The saga of Whitehead Hall began officially in 1955, when President Harry E. Dodge suggested that $2,321,000 be included in the New York City capital budget for the construction of a new staff and classroom building. The procedures that followed before the building could be constructed and then opened made the term "red-tape" meaningful.

There are 20 steps involved in the preparation of maintenance and construction contracts," BC Business Manager Arthur J. Hillary explained. In the years 1955-59, the major steps in preparation for the construction of Whitehead Hall were taken. They included the President's 1956 request to the BHE, the BHE request for an appropriation for the architect's fee, the New York City Board of Estimate's approval of the architect's contract, the BHE's approval of the preliminary and then the final plans and specifications for the building, the Board of Estimates' approval of the final plans and specifications, the advertising for bids on the construction and, finally, the authorization of the awards of the contracts for construction and the Board of Estimate's approval of the contracts.

Chairmen's Choice

The name of Alfred North Whitehead was selected for the new social science building by Professors Charles Ascher, John Hope Packer, Howard Hilts, Rex Homer and Jacob Loeb, chairman of the Planning Committee, Anthropology, Geology, Mathematics and Philosophy.

Early Housewarming

The official opening of "Tadpole Hall" is to be held next month, but it has been occupied by faculty for two weeks to test the building to its limits.

Dean of Administration Francis J. Kilcogney said, "The biological department is currently making plans for landscaping the building."

"The college is still officially authorized to help relieve the overcrowding of 7,408 CLASS, 8,592 908 and 1,998 Graduate Division students and 580 faculty members have been opened to a BC population of 10,047, 10,149 and 1,256 students, respectively, in these divisions and a faculty of 1,200."

"When the building was authorized, we were promised that we would have offices," Dean Kilcogney pointed out, "We knew that our enrollment was going to 'suck up,' but we did think that the classrooms and lecture halls of Whitehead would provide some relief. However, the enrollment that has elapsed since the original planning, the enrollment, however, has risen to a figure far exceeding our expectations," he explained. There is enough steel in the structure for the addition of two more floors as well as provision for another elevator, if necessary.