THE CLOSING OF THE AMERICAN MIND

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Foreword by Saul Bellow

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intellectual force in our times, then the crisis of the German university, which everyone saw, is the crisis of the university everywhere.

It may be thought that I have devoted too much space to this idiosyncratic history of the university. But the university, of all institutions, is most dependent on the deepest beliefs of those who participate in its peculiar life. Our present educational problems cannot seriously be attributed to bad administrators, weakness of will, lack of discipline, lack of money, insufficient attention to the three R's, or any of the other common explanations that indicate things will be set aright if we professors would just pull up our socks. All these things are the result of a deeper lack of belief in the university's vocation. One cannot say that we must defend academic freedom when there are grave doubts about the principles underlying academic freedom. To march out to battle on behalf of the university may be noble, but it is only a patriotic gesture. Such gestures are necessary and useful for nations, but they do little for universities. Thought is all in all for universities. Today there is precious little thought about universities, and what there is does not unequivocally support the university's traditional role. In order to find out why we have fallen on such hard times, we must recognize that the foundations of the university have become extremely doubtful to the highest intelligences. Our petty tribulations have great causes. What happened to the universities in Germany in the thirties is what has happened and is happening everywhere. The essence of it all is not social, political, psychological or economic, but philosophic. And, for those who wish to see, contemplation of Socrates is our most urgent task. This is properly an academic task.

THE SIXTIES

"You don't have to intimidate us," said the famous professor of philosophy in April 1969, to ten thousand triumphant students supporting a group of black students who had just persuaded "us," the faculty of Cornell University, to do their will by threatening the use of firearms as well as threatening the lives of individual professors. A member of the ample press corps newly specialized in reporting the hottest item of the day, the university, muttered, "You said it, brother." The reporter had learned a proper contempt for the moral and intellectual qualities of professors. Servility, vanity and lack of conviction are not difficult to discern.

The professors, the repositories of our best traditions and highest intellectual aspirations, were fawning over what was nothing better than a rabble; publicly confessing their guilt and apologizing for not having understood the most important moral issues, the proper response to which they were learning from the mob; expressing their willingness to change the university's goals and the content of what they taught. As I surveyed this spectacle, Marx's overused dictum kept coming to my mind against my will: History always repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. The American university in the sixties was experiencing the same dismantling of the structure of rational inquiry as had the German university in the thirties. No longer believing in their higher vocation, both gave way to a highly ideologized student populace. And the content of the ideology was the same—value commitment. The university had aban-

doned all claim to study or inform about value—undermining the sense of the value of what it taught, while turning over the *decision* about values to the folk, the *Zeitgeist*, the relevant. Whether it be Nuremberg or Woodstock, the principle is the same. As Hegel was said to have died in Germany in 1933, Enlightenment in America came close to breathing its last during the sixties. The fact that the universities are no longer in convulsions does not mean that they have regained their health. As in Germany, the value crisis in philosophy made the university prey to whatever intense passion moved the masses. It went comfortably along until there was a popular fit of moralism, and then became aware that it had nothing to contribute and was persuaded by a guilty sense that its distance from the world made it immoral. Hardly any element in the university believed seriously that its distance was based on something true and necessary, the self-confident possession of the kinds of standpoint outside of public opinion that made it easy for Socrates to resist the pious fanaticism of the Athenian people who put their victorious generals to death after Arginusae, or to refuse to collaborate with the Athenian tyrants. Socrates thought it more important to discuss justice, to try to know what it is, than to engage himself in implementing whatever partial perspective on it happened to be exciting the passions of the day, causing the contemplative to be called unjust and impious.

Of course anyone who is a professional contemplative holding down a prestigious and well-paying job, and who also believes there is nothing to contemplate, finds himself in a difficult position with respect to himself and to the community. The imperative to promote equality, stamp out racism, sexism and elitism (the peculiar crimes of our democratic society), as well as war, is overriding for a man who can define no other interest worthy of defending. The fact that in Germany the politics were of the Right and in the United States of the Left should not mislead us. In both places the universities gave way under the pressure of mass movements, and did so in large measure because they thought those movements possessed a moral truth superior to any the university could provide. Commitment was understood to be profounder than science, passion than reason, history than nature, the young than the old. In fact, as I have argued, the thought was really the same. The New Left in America was a Nietzscheanized-Heideggerianized Left. The unthinking hatred of "bourgeois society" was exactly the same in both places. A distinguished

professor of political science proved this when he read to his radical students some speeches about what was to be done. They were enthusiastic until he informed them that the speeches were by Mussolini. Heidegger himself, late in his life, made overtures to the New Left. The most sinister formula in his Rectoral Address of 1933 was, with only the slightest of alterations, the slogan of the American professors who collaborated with the student movements of the sixties: "The time for decision is past. The decision has already been made by the youngest part of the German nation."

At Cornell and elsewhere in the United States, it was farce because —whatever the long-range future of our polity—the mass of the country (there really was no mass but a citizenry) was at that moment unusually respectful of the universities, regarded them as resources for the improvement of Americans, and accepted the notion that scholarship should be left undisturbed and was likely to produce a great range of views that should be treated seriously and with tolerance. The nation was not ready for great changes and believed about universities the things professors professed to believe about them. A few students discovered that pompous teachers who catechized them about academic freedom could, with a little shove, be made into dancing bears. Children tend to be rather better observers of adults' characters than adults are of children's, because children are so dependent on adults that it is very much in their interest to discover the weaknesses of their elders. These students discerned that their teachers did not really believe that freedom of thought was necessarily a good and useful thing, that they suspected all this was ideology protecting the injustices of our "system," and that they could be pressured into benevolence toward violent attempts to change the ideology. Heidegger was fully aware that the theoretical foundations of academic freedom had been weakened and, as I have said, treated the mass movement he faced with a certain irony. The American professors were not aware of what they no longer believed, and they took ever so seriously the movements they were entangled with.

I became fully aware of this when I went to see Cornell's then provost (who later became president when the unfavorable national publicity continued and the usually passive trustees asked for the resignation of the incumbent because the national publicity about the guns appeared to be damaging the university's reputation), concerning a black student

whose life had been threatened by a black faculty member when the student refused to participate in a demonstration. The provost was a former natural scientist, and he greeted me with a mournful countenance. He, of course, fully sympathized with the young man's plight. However, things were bad, and there was nothing he could do to stop such behavior in the black student association. He, personally, hoped there would soon be better communication with the radical black students (this was a few weeks before the guns emerged and permitted much clearer communication). But for the time being the administration had to wait to hear what the blacks wanted,[10] in the expectation that tensions could be reduced. He added that no university in the country could expel radical black students, or dismiss the faculty members who incited them, presumably because the students at large would not permit it.

I saw that this had been a useless undertaking on my part. The provost had a mixture of cowardice and moralism not uncommon at the time. He did not want trouble. His president had frequently cited Clark Kerr's dismissal at the University of California as the great danger. Kerr had not known how to conciliate the students. At the same time the provost thought he was engaged in a great moral work, righting the historic injustice done to blacks. He could justify to himself the humiliation he was undergoing as a necessary sacrifice. The case of this particular black student clearly bothered him.[11] But he was both more frightened of the violence-threatening extremists and also more admiring of them. Obvious questions were no longer obvious: Why could not a black student

[10]Up to that time there had only been hints of the following kind: the chairman of the Economics Department had been held hostage for several hours, along with his secretary, in furtherance of a demand that an assistant professor deemed racist be dismissed; the building housing a part of the Sociology Department had been forcibly seized, and its inhabitants as well as furnishings had been ejected; the president had been physically assaulted. In response to these communications, proofs of the bona fides of the following kind had been given to the students: the assistant professor disappeared from campus; and for good measure the black assistant dean, who had the misfortune of being an integrationist at a time when black power had come into vogue, was fired; the faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences received a memorandum from its dean informing the members that, although none were demonstrably overt racists, all were indeed institutional racists; classes for blacks only were established; the house that was being held by right of conquest was accorded to its new inhabitants by consent; a lavishly funded black studies center was established in the faculty appointments to which the black students were to have a voice. Such signs had not yet succeeded in establishing the kind of "dialogue" hoped for.

[11]The president himself appeared to be interested only in protecting himself and avoiding having to confront the black student association or any other radical group. He was of the moral stamp of those who were angry with Poland for resisting Hitler because this precipitated the war.

be expelled as a white student would be if he failed his courses or disobeyed the rules that make university community possible? Why could the president not call the police if order was threatened? Any man of weight would have fired the professor who threatened the life of the student. The issue was not complicated. Only the casuistry of weakness and ideology made it so. Ordinary decency dictated the proper response. No one who knew or cared about what a university is would have acquiesced in this travesty. It was no surprise that a few weeks later—immediately after the faculty had voted overwhelmingly under the gun to capitulate to outrageous demands that it had a few days earlier rejected—the leading members of the administration and many well-known faculty members rushed over to congratulate the gathered students and tried to win their approval. I saw exposed before all the world what had long been known, and it was at last possible without impropriety to tell these pseudo-universitarians precisely what one thought of them.

It was also no surprise that many of those professors who had been most eloquent in their sermons about the sanctity of the university, and who had presented themselves as its consciences, were among those who reacted, if not favorably, at least weakly to what was happening. They had made careers out of saying how badly the German professors had reacted to violations of academic freedom. This was all light talk and mock heroics, because they had not measured the potential threats to the university nor assessed the doubtful grounds of academic freedom. Above all, they did not think that it could be assaulted from the Left or from within the university, although serious examination of the events in Germany would have taught them that it was indeed the university youth, as Heidegger pointed out, who had become disenchanted on theoretical grounds with the old education, and that much of the same thing had been going on here. The society at large had gradually been persuaded of the justice of liberal notions of intellectual freedom just as the first waves of doubt about them from Europe were smacking against our shores. A conviction of the self-evidence of Enlightenment principles to all thinking people, combined with simplistic economic and psychological explanations, permitted American professors to misinterpret the German experience and to avoid the fact that the theoretical critique of morality in all its forms had been the precondition of the acceptability of certain kinds of public speech in Germany during the twenties. These American profes-

sors were utterly disarmed, as were many German professors, when the constituency that they took for granted, of which they honestly believed they were independent, deserted or turned against them. Students and colleagues wanted to radicalize and politicize the university. To fulminate against Bible Belt preachers was one thing. In the world that counted for these professors, this could only bring approval. But to be isolated in the university, to be called foul names by their students or their colleagues, all for the sake of an abstract idea, was too much for them. They were not in general strong men, although their easy rhetoric had persuaded them that they were—that they alone manned the walls protecting civilization. Their collapse was merely pitiful, although their feeble attempts at self-justification frequently turned vicious. In Germany the professors who kept quiet had the very good excuse that they could not do otherwise. Speaking up would have meant imprisonment or death. The law not only did not protect them but was their deadly enemy. At Cornell there was no such danger. A couple of professors might have been hurt (inasmuch as those who had been dubbed racists,[12] a qualification equivalent to heretic in earlier times, were utterly abandoned by all but a few persons of decent instincts, and the president was in no way disposed to protect anyone other than himself), but one shot fired would have brought the civil authorities in. Those authorities were only restrained by respect for the special autonomous status of the university, which was being exploited to protect and encourage violators of academic freedom as well as of the law that governs ordinary mortals. There was essentially no risk in defending the integrity of the university, because the danger was entirely within it. All that was lacking was a professorial corps aware of the university's purpose, and dedicated to it. That is what made the surrender so contemptible. The official ideology became that there had been no danger to the threatened professors (thus no need for solidarity with them) and also that there was severe danger of violence and death (thus a need for capitulation).

One of the pious sermonizers who failed to speak out and who fancied himself a political philosopher wrote an article for *The New York Times Magazine* explaining to the world why capitulation had been

[12]Among those threatened over the university radio was the professor who had probably done more and risked more in the civil rights movement than anyone else at Cornell.

necessary at Cornell. The "social contract," he averred, was about to be broken, and we would have returned to "the state of nature," the war of all against all, the worst evil, so that anything to keep that from happening was justified. He proved therewith that he had never understood what he had been teaching, for the contract theorists (from whose teachings the American form of government was derived) all taught that the law must never be broken, that the strength of the law is the only thing that keeps us away from the state of nature, therefore that risks and dangers must be accepted for the sake of the law. Once the law is broken with impunity, each man regains the right to any means he deems proper or necessary in order to defend himself against the new tyrant, the one who can break the law. Such frivolous use, as was made by this professor, of the teachings that must be understood if there is to be a reasonable political order is emblematic of the real problem that lay behind all of this disruption of university life. Serious discussion of political problems and thought had almost been forgotten; and those to whom it was entrusted had no abiding concern for such discussion. The tradition was only a set of slogans or quotations from Bartlett's. Reflection about civil society and the university's role within it had withered away.

There were two results of the campus disruptions. The university was incorporated much more firmly into the system of democratic public opinion, and the condition of cavelike darkness amidst prosperity feared by Tocqueville was brought painfully near. When the dust settled it could be seen that the very distinction between educated and uneducated in America had been leveled, that even the pitiful remnant of it expressed in the opposition between highbrow and lowbrow had been annihilated. The real product was the homogenized persons described in Part One. The very ideas of truly different goals and motives of action that we can really take seriously, incarnated not only in systems of thought but in real and poetic models, began to disappear.

Freedom had been restricted in the most effective way—by the impoverishment of alternatives. Nothing that was not known to or experienced by those who constitute the enormous majority—which is ultimately the only authority in America—had any reality. Catering to democracy's most dangerous and vulgar temptations was the function of the famous "critical philosophy." Thus this fatal progress was accompanied by all the abstract substitutes for thought I discussed in Part Two.

They provided an artificial substitute for intellectual stimulation and confirmed that the way we are is the only way to be. They were just what the doctor ordered, as their enormous popularity suggests. All the radicalism of the sixties was intended to hasten our movement in the directions in which we were already going, and never really to question these directions. It was an exercise in egalitarian self-satisfaction that wiped out the elements of the university curriculum that did not flatter our peculiar passions or tastes of the moment. In short, the window to Europe, which was always the resource of free and oppressed spirits in America, was slammed shut, more definitively because Europeans were helping us do it while promising that they were opening it. What at the time appeared to be "elite" opinion current only among university intellectuals was in reality the next day's popular magazine feature. The longing for Europe has been all but extinguished in the young.

About the sixties it is now fashionable to say that although there were indeed excesses, many good things resulted. But, so far as universities are concerned, I know of nothing positive coming from that period; it was an unmitigated disaster for them. I hear that the good things were "greater openness," "less rigidity," "freedom from authority," etc.—but these have no content and express no view of what is wanted from a university education. During the sixties I sat on various committees at Cornell and continuously and futilely voted against dropping one requirement after the next. The old core curriculum—according to which every student in the college had to take a smattering of courses in the major divisions of knowledge—was abandoned. One professor of comparative literature—an assiduous importer of the latest Paris fashions—explained that these requirements taught little, really did not introduce students to the various disciplines, and bored them. I admitted this to be true. He then expressed surprise at my unwillingness to give them up. It was because they were, I said, a threadbare reminiscence of the unity of knowledge and provided an obstinate little hint that there are some things one must know about if one is to be educated. You don't replace something with nothing. Of course, that was exactly what the educational reform of the sixties was doing. The consequences are most visible now in the declining study of languages, but they are just as profound, or more so, in all of humane learning. The criticism of the old is of no value if there is no prospect of the new. It is a way of removing the impediments to vice

presented by decaying virtue. In the sixties the professors were just hastening to fold up their tents so as to be off the grounds before the stampede trampled them. The openness was to "doing your own thing." It was, and I suppose still is, a sure sign of an authoritarian personality to believe that the university should try to have a vision of what an educated person is. "Growth" or "individual development" was all that was to be permitted, which in America meant only that the vulgarities present in society at large would overwhelm the delicate little plants kept in the university greenhouse for those who need other kinds of nourishment.

The reforms were without content, made for the "inner-directed" person. They were an acquiescence in a leveling off of the peaks, and were the source of the collapse of the entire American educational structure, recognized by all parties when they talk about the need to go "back to basics." This collapse is directly traceable to both the teachings and the deeds of the universities in the sixties. More important than the bad teachers and the self-indulgent doctrines was the disappearance of the reasons for and the models of—for example—"the king's English." The awareness of the highest is what points the lower upward. Now, it may be possible, with a lot of effort and political struggle, to return to earlier standards of accomplishment in the three R's, but it will not be so easy to recover the knowledge of philosophy, history and literature that was trashed. That was never a native plant. We were dependent on Europe for it. All of our peaks were derivative, with full self-awareness and without being ashamed of it. In the meantime, Europe itself, on which we could count if we faltered, has undergone an evolution similar to our own, and we cannot go there to train ourselves as once we could. Short of great new theoretical and artistic impulses rising up on their own here to replace the West's legacy to us, there is no way but tradition to have kept us in contact with such things. And one cannot jump on and off the tradition like a train. Once broken, our link with it is hard to renew. The instinctive awareness of meanings, as well as the stores of authentic learning in the heads of scholars, are lost. Neither aristocrats nor priests, the natural bearers of high intellectual tradition, exist in any meaningful sense in America. The greatest of thoughts were in our political principles but were never embodied, hence not living, in a class of men. Their home in America was the university, and the violation of that home was the crime of the sixties. Calming the universities down, stopping grade inflation,

making students study, all of that may be salutary, but it does not go to the heart of the matter. There is much less in the university to study now.

Around the campus disruptions and the student movement there has grown up a mythology, an expression of the tastes of those for whom the atmosphere depicted in *Ten Days that Shook the World* is more stimulating than that in Hegel's Berlin lecture room would have been. One of the myths is that the fifties were a period of intellectual conformism and superficiality, whereas there was real excitement and questioning in the sixties. McCarthyism—invoked when Stalinism is mentioned in order to even the balance of injustice between the two superpowers—symbolizes those gray, grim years, while the blazing sixties were the days of "the movement" and, to hear its survivors tell it, their single-handed liberation of the blacks, the women and the South Vietnamese. Without entering into the strictly political issues, the intellectual picture projected is precisely the opposite of the truth. The sixties were the period of dogmatic answers and trivial tracts. Not a single book of lasting importance was produced in or around the movement. It was all Norman O. Brown and Charles Reich. This was when the real conformism hit the universities, when opinions about everything from God to the movies became absolutely predictable. The evidence brought from pop culture to bolster the case for the sixties—that in the fifties Lana Turner played torchy, insincere adulteresses while in the sixties we got Jane Fonda as an authentic whore; that before the sixties we had Paul Anka and after we had the Rolling Stones—is of no importance. Even if this characterization were true, it would only go to prove that there is no relation between popular culture and high culture, and that the former is all that is now influential on our scene.

The fact is that the fifties were one of the great periods of the American university, taking into account, of course, the eternal disproportion between the ideal and the real. Even the figures most seminal for "the movement," like Marcuse, Arendt and Mills, did what serious work they did prior to 1960. From 1933 on the American universities profited from the arrival of many of Europe's greatest scholars and scientists as well as a number of clever intellectuals of a sophistication beyond that known to their American counterparts. They were, for the most part, heirs of the German university tradition, which, as I have discussed, was the greatest expression of the publicly supported and approved version of the theoretical life. All were steeped in the general vision of humane education inspired by Kant and Goethe, whose thought and talents were of world historical significance and who intransigently and without compromise looked to the highest moral and artistic fulfillments within the new democratic order of things. They initiated us into a tradition that was living, and that penetrated the tastes and standards of society at large. Those who received this tradition had experience of the vast scholarship accumulated since its inception, as well as the advanced ideas that clustered around its inspiration. For better or worse, German ideas were where it was at—and where it still is—whether it be the ideas of Marx, Freud, Weber or Heidegger. In the chairs of philosophy in the German university there was an amazing correspondence between real talent and conventional respectability. Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger were the respected figures of their day, whose significance did not consist in their merely holding the chairs. An awareness of all this, and in many cases much more than an awareness, was brought by the refugees to the United States, which, speaking relatively, had been a backwater and a consumer. Much of what Americans previously had gone to seek elsewhere was now here. Although this was a mixed blessing in many respects, the fact that so many of the best physicists, mathematicians, historians, sociologists, classicists and teachers of philosophy were in the United States meant that we could learn here what one had to learn; or, rather, however defective what we had here, our quest for learning could no longer be better satisfied by the physical voyage to the Old World. In a word, before the dam burst, the American university had become largely independent of the contemporary European university. The refugees' students here were gradually taking the places of their teachers.

Of course, part of this independence was due to the decline of the Continental universities, especially the destruction of the German universities, the break in their intellectual tradition and the loss of inner confidence and the sense of high vocation they once possessed. But, no matter what the cause, in 1955 no universities were better than the best American universities in the things that have to do with a liberal education and arousing in students the awareness of their intellectual needs. And this was an extremely important fact for the civilization of the West. If in 1930 American universities had simply disappeared, the general store of learning of general significance would not have been seriously damaged, al-

though it would surely not have been a good thing for us. But in 1960, inasmuch as most of intellectual life had long ago settled in universities and the American ones were the best, their decay or collapse was a catastrophe. Much of the great tradition was here, an alien and weak transplant, perched precariously in enclaves, vulnerable to native populism and vulgarity. In the mid-sixties the natives, in the guise of students, attacked.

Another aspect of the mythology is that McCarthyism had an extremely negative impact on the universities. Actually the McCarthy period was the last time the university had any sense of community, defined by a common enemy. McCarthy, those like him, and those who followed them, were clearly nonacademic and antiacademic, the barbarians at the gates. In major universities they had no effect whatsoever on curriculum or appointments. The range of thought and speech that took place within them was unaffected. Academic freedom had for that last moment more than an abstract meaning, a content with respect to research and publication about which there was general agreement. The rhetoric about the protection of unpopular ideas meant something, partly because the publicly unpopular ideas were not so unpopular in universities. Today there are many more things unthinkable and unspeakable in universities than there were then, and little disposition to protect those who have earned the ire of the radical movements. The old liberalism—belief in progress and the free market of ideas—had its last moment of vigor at that time. In the sixties, when things seemed to be going in the right direction, the old liberalism was understood more and more to be a part of bourgeois ideology, favoring and protecting the voices of reaction as opposed to those of progress. In the fifties the campuses were calm, most professors were against McCarthy (although, as one would expect in a democracy, some were for him; and, as one would also expect, human nature and professors being what they are, some who were against him were too timid to speak out). Professors were not fired, and they taught what they pleased in their classrooms. For that moment at least, there was a heightened awareness of the university's special status as a preserve against public opinion. That was a very healthy thing. In the sixties many professors, some of whom were notably silent during the McCarthy years, lost that awareness when the opinions they were attached to became more popular. The screen of academic freedom was no longer necessary now that the

going was good. The American Association of University Professors' Cornell chapter applauded the black activists who infringed the rights of professors, and the national organization did nothing to protect academic freedom. Such groups abandoned merely formal freedom to support substantive causes. In short, in the fifties a goodly portion of the professors still held the views about freedom of thought put forward by Bacon, Milton, Locke and John Stuart Mill (this was just prior to the success in America of the Continental critique of these); another portion were of the Left, and they had a personal interest in the protection afforded them by those views. When the former lost their confidence, and the latter gained theirs, the strength of academic freedom declined drastically.

A final part of the mythology of the sixties is the alleged superior moral "concern" of the students. Morality became all the rage in the late sixties, succeeding the hard-nosed realism of the preceding years. But what was meant by morality has to be made clear. There is a perennial and unobtrusive view that morality consists in such things as telling the truth, paying one's debts, respecting one's parents and doing no voluntary harm to anyone. Those are all things easy to say and hard to do; they do not attract much attention, and win little honor in the world. The good will, as described by Kant, is a humble notion, accessible to every child, but its fulfillment is the activity of a lifetime of performing the simple duties prescribed by it. This morality always requires sacrifice. It sometimes entails danger and confrontation, but they are not of its essence and occur incidentally. Such morality, in order to be itself, must be for itself and not for some result beyond it. It requires resistance to the charms of feeling good about it and acclaim for it. This was not the morality that came into vogue in the sixties, which was an altogether more histrionic version of moral conduct, the kind that characterizes heroes in extreme situations. Thomas More's resistance to a tyrant's commands was the daily fare of students' imagination. Such challenges—which arise rarely, are always ambiguous in terms of both duty and motive, and require the subtlest reasoning as well as all the other virtues in the highest degree in order to be addressed justly—were the moral stuff on which these cubs teethed. It was not, of course, the complexity of such cases that was attractive but their brilliance, the noble pose. Somehow it was never the everyday business of obeying the law that was interesting; more so was breaking it in the name of the higher law. It was always Achilles and

Agamemnon. Conscience, a faculty thoroughly discredited in modern political and moral thought and particularly despised by Marx, made a great comeback, as the all-purpose ungrounded ground of moral determination, sufficient at its slightest rumbling to discredit all other obligations or loyalties. Hitler became the regulative principle of the conscience: "You wouldn't obey Hitler, would you?" So refined had the capacity for moral discrimination become, it followed that the elected American officials and the duly approved federal, state and local laws had no more authority than did Hitler. At Cornell, students were graced by the preachings of Father Daniel Berrigan, who explained that old ladies who work as secretaries for draft boards are the equivalent of the Beast of Belsen and deserve no more respectful treatment than she did. This was the temper of the moral revival. The models were a mixture of the makers of revolutions who hawk new moralities and liberate from prevailing constraint, and the heroes of popular existentialist literature whose morality consists in self-affirmation. One began to suspect that the new moralism was just a new dress for the antimorality of the preceding generation, which thought morality repression.

The content of this morality was derived simply from the leading notions of modern democratic thought, absolutized and radicalized. Equality, freedom, peace, cosmopolitanism were the goods, the only goods, without conflict among one another, available to us here and now. Not to be considered were natural differences in gifts or in habitual practice of the virtues, the restraints liberty must impose on itself, wars for the defense of democracy (other than wars of liberation). Devotion to family or country as a form of morality was the last refuge of reaction. There were two poles, supposed to be in perfect harmony, the self-development of the absolute individual and the brotherhood of all mankind. These goods or, rather, values, came on the winds. They were not the product of students' reasoning or study. They were inherent in our regime, they constituted its horizon. There was nothing new in it. The newness was in the thoughtlessness, the utter lack of need to argue or prove. Alternative views had no existence except as scarecrows.

This was an almost inevitable result of generations of teaching that the most instinctive of all questions—What is good?—has no place in the university, and that supersophisticated doctrines that dismiss and ridicule this question and the instinct animating it are the only things worthy of

study. If the university's teachers cannot teach about the good, why should the students not teach it? The fact-value distinction admits that values are essential to life and shape the way facts are seen and used. Therefore values are primary. And if they do not come from reason, then they come from passionate commitment, the essence of morality. Of course, since commitment did not really produce values, the values adopted were the remnants of old reasoning, values with fallen arches, reaffirmed by claims of passionate commitment. The teachers were at first appalled by this return to old, bad ways of thought. But since they too were moral persons, and the values asserted were the ones they privately believed, finally they gave gay assent. David Easton's disgraceful presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1966 said all this. Behavioralism (i.e., the social science founded on the fact-value distinction, devoted to the study of facts and contemptuous of philosophy) had not, he admitted, been sufficiently sensitive to moral issues. Now he promised a post-behavioralism in which the great achievements of social science would be put in the service of the right values. The piper would henceforward play the tune called by the students, and they were not even paying.

Indignation or rage was the vivid passion characterizing those in the grip of the new moral experience. Indignation may be a most noble passion and necessary for fighting wars and righting wrongs. But of all the experiences of the soul it is the most inimical to reason and hence to the university. Anger, to sustain itself, requires an unshakable conviction that one is right. Whether the student wrath against the professorial Agamemnons was authentically Achillean is open to question. But there is no doubt that it was the banner under which they fought, the proof of belonging.

Now, it has always been thought that moral conduct did not need precisely to be painful in order to be moral, but that it could not be itself if it were fun. However interpreted, it is connected with a self-overcoming that being wise or beautiful—or any other of the qualities for which human beings are thought to be enviable—do not require. That is why it commands special respect and also why there is so great a temptation to simulate it. The man who sacrifices his life for justice evidently has motives superior to those of most men, or a disinterestedness incomprehensible to them. They cannot help being impressed. In an admirable phrase Montesquieu encapsulated the moral taste that the student leaders

represented and on which they played: "Men, although they are individually rascals, are collectively a most decent lot: they love morality." This is the formula for Tartuffe. The student moralism was a species of the Tartuffe phenomenon, but a wholly new mutant of it. Unlike other revolutionary movements, which tended to be austere and chaste—beginning with the first revolution, 1688, in England, which was really puritan —this one was antipuritanical. The slogan was "Make love, not war." Although the similarity of language was exploited, this is very different from "Love thy neighbor," which is an injunction very difficult to fulfill. "To make love" is a bodily act, very easy to perform and thought to be pleasant. The word "obscene" was transferred out of sex into politics. Somehow the students had touched on a whole set of desires previously thought to be questionable, which had hardly dared to name themselves but which were ripe for emancipation and legitimation. The ideology for the revolution was already in place. Moderation of the infinite bodily desires had become "repression" of nature, one of the forms of *domination,* the buzzword of the advanced thinkers and consciousness raisers. All that was needed were the heroes willing to act out the fantasies the public was now ready to accept as reality: the hero, as hedonist, who dares to do in public what the public wants to see. It was *épater les bourgeois* as a bourgeois calling. The practices of the late Roman empire were promoted with the moral fervor of early Christianity and the political idealism of Robespierre. Such a combination is, of course, impossible. It is playacting, a role, and the students knew it. But that haunting sentiment was assuaged by the fact that this was the first revolution made for TV. They were real because they could see themselves on television. All the world had become a stage, and they were playing leads. The cure proposed for the bourgeois disease really was its most advanced symptom.

A partial list of the sacrifices made by the students to their morality will suffice to show its character: they were able to live as they pleased in the university, as *in loco parentis* responsibilities were abandoned; drugs became a regular part of life, with almost no interference from university authorities, while the civil authority was kept at bay by the university's alleged right to police its own precincts; all sexual restrictions imposed by rule or disapproval were overturned; academic requirements were relaxed in every imaginable way, and grade inflation made it difficult to flunk; avoidance of military service was a way of life and a principle. All of these privileges were disguised with edifying labels such as individual responsibility, experience, growth, development, self-expression, liberation, concern. Never in history had there been such a marvelous correspondence between the good and the pleasant. Richard Nixon, with his unerring instinct for the high moral ground and the noble motive for consensus, assessed his student antagonists and ended the draft. Miraculously the student movement came to an end, although the war continued for almost three years thereafter.

A final note about an aspect of the students' motivation that has not received sufficient attention: In addition to the desire to live as they pleased, a covert elitism was at work among them. A permanent feature of democracy, always and everywhere, is a tendency to suppress the claims of any kind of superiority, conventional or natural, essentially by denying that there is superiority, particularly with respect to ruling. The Platonic dialogues are full of young men who passionately desire political glory and believe they have the talent to rule. Plato admits that he himself was once such a young man. And they lived in a city where their peculiar right to rule was denied them, where they would find it difficult to get ruling office, and where to do so they would have to make themselves into what the people wanted. They burned with that special indignation a man reserves for wrongs done to himself, and believed that their potential could not be fulfilled in democratic Athens. They constituted a subversive group in the city, unfriendly to the maintenance of its regime. Such were many of the companions of Socrates, and taming this instinct for rule was an essential part of the education he gave them. But he began by accepting, at least partially, the legitimacy of their longing and denying the unadulterated right of the many to rule over the few. He gave intellectual satisfaction to their complaint. And, more important, he took very seriously the element in their souls that made them ambitious. The aspiration to be number one and gain great fame is both natural in man and, properly trained, one of the soul's great strengths. Democracy in itself is hostile to such spiritedness and prevents its fulfillment. This was a problem for all ancient democracies. Coriolanus represents an extreme example of the man who refuses to ground his right to rule on any admixture of consent of the people, in this case a people ready to accept his right to rule. But he is not an entirely unadmirable man. The strength of his soul is a result of the part of it that makes him proud and ambitious, that seeks an autonomy not dependent on others' opinions or wills.

The problem of ambition in democracy is much aggravated by mod-

em democracy. Ancient democracies were factually powerful, but they did not persuade the proud and the ambitious that the rule of the many is just. Inner confidence was not weakened by the sense that the master has right on his side, for there was neither a religion nor a philosophy of equality. The talented young could hope, and sometimes act, without guilt, to gain first place. This has been changed partially, but only partially, by Christianity. It asserted equality before God and condemned pride, but it left the inequalities of this world in place. More important was the work of modern philosophy, which established a rational teaching, making political equality the only just system of society. There is no intellectual ground remaining for any regime other than democracy. The soul cannot find encouragement for its longing anywhere. Moreover, the modern thinkers developed a scheme of things in which individual ambition would have little hope of success. The outline of this scheme is presented in Federalist X. The sheer size of this country, as well as its organization and its stability, has a disheartening effect on the potential ruler. Even more important have been the efforts of modern philosophers to root pride and great ambition out of the soul. At the outset, Hobbes's psychology treated what he called vainglory as a pathological condition based on ignorance of man's vulnerability, on unjustified confidence. This condition can, according to him, be cured by liberal doses of fear. One need only hear what is said today about competition among educators and in the press, and read Rousseau and Freud on related issues, to recognize how much of modernity is devoted to unmanning this disposition. Elitism is the catch-all epithet expressing our disapproval of the proud and the desire to be first.

But, unsupported and excoriated, this part of the soul lives on, dwelling underground, receiving no sublimating education. As with all repressed impulses, it has its daily effects on personality and also occasionally bursts forth in various disguises and monstrous shapes. Much of modern history can be explained by the search of what Plato called spiritedness for legitimate self-expression. Certainly compassion and the idea of the vanguard were essentially democratic covers for elitist self-assertion. Rousseau, who first made compassion the foundation of democratic sentiment, was fully aware that a sense of superiority to the sufferer is a component of the human experience of compassion. He actually was attempting to channel the inegalitarian impulse into egalitarian channels.

Similarly the avant-garde (usually used in relation to art) and the vanguard (usually used in relation to politics) are democratic modes of distinguishing oneself, of being ahead, of leading, without denying the democratic principle. The members of the vanguard have just a small evanescent advantage. They now know what everyone will soon know. This posture conciliates instinct with principle. And it was the one adopted by the students who feared assimilation to the democratic man. There they were in those few elite universities, which were being rapidly democratized. And their political futures were bleak, their educations not advantaging them for elective office, providing only the prospect of having to work their way up in the dreary fashion of such contemptible persons as Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. But these universities were respected, looked to by the democratic press and were the alma maters of much of the powerful elite. These little places could easily be seized, just as a polis could have been seized. Using them as a stage, students instantly achieved notoriety. Young black students I knew at Cornell appeared on the covers of the national news magazines. How irresistible it all was, an elite shortcut to political influence. In the ordinary world, outside the universities, such youngsters would have had no way of gaining attention. They took as their models Mao, Castro and Che Guevara, promoters of equality, if you please, but surely not themselves equal to anyone. They themselves wanted to be the leaders of a revolution of compassion. The great objects of their contempt and fury were the members of the American middle class, professionals, workers, white collar and blue, farmers—all of those vulgarians who made up the American majority and who did not need or want either the compassion or the leadership of the students. They dared to think themselves equal to the students and to resist having their consciousness raised by them. It is very difficult to distinguish oneself in America, and in order to do so the students substituted conspicuous compassion for their parents' conspicuous consumption. They specialized in being the advocates of all those in America and the Third World who did not challenge their sense of superiority and who, they imagined, would accept their leadership. None of the exquisite thrills of egalitarian vanity were alien to them.

One could appreciate and even sympathize with the frustrated inclinations, the love of glory that could not be avowed, the quest for the recognition of excellence that were revealed in the sixties campus politics.

However, the hypocrisy of it all, and the ignorance of what a man has to know and to risk in order to be political, made the spectacle more repulsive than touching. Tyrannical impulses masqueraded as democratic compassion, and quest for distinction as love of equality. Self-knowledge was utterly lacking, and their conquest was so easy. The elite should really be elite, but these elitists were given the distinction they craved without having earned it. The university provided a kind of affirmative-action elitism. There had for a long time been a conspiracy in the universities to deny that there is a problem for the superior individual, particularly the one with the gift and the passion for ruling, in democratic society. Suddenly they found themselves confronted by potential rulers who accused them of complicity in the crime of ruling. It served them right.

It was with respect to precisely this problem that I had one of my greatest satisfactions as a teacher. The little Greek Civilization Program a group of professors set up against the currents had just gotten under way the year of the crisis. It consisted of about a dozen enthusiastic freshmen, and we had been reading Plato's *Republic* during the entire year. We had not finished it when the university became a chaos. Almost all classes ceased, as students and professors alike turned to the serious business of making the revolution, hanging about the campus and going from one crazy meeting to another. I had joined with a group of professors who announced they would not teach until the guns were off campus and some kind of legitimate order had been restored. But these students had become deeply involved with the story of the ambitious Glaucon, who was founding a city with the help of Socrates. So we continued to meet informally. They were really more interested in the book than the revolution, which in itself proved what kind of a counter-charm the university ought to provide to the siren calls of the contemporary scene. These students were rather contemptuous of what was going on, because it got in the way of what they thought it important to do. They wanted to find out what happened to Glaucon during his wonderful night with Socrates. They really *looked down* from the classroom on the frantic activity outside, thinking they were privileged, hardly a one tempted to join the crowd. I later found out that some of these students had indeed gone down from the library seminar room into the agora, where the action was. They had made copies of the following lines from the *Republic* and handed them out, competing with the hawkers of other kinds of tracts:

> "Do you too believe, as do the many, that certain young men are corrupted by sophists, and that there are certain sophists who in a private capacity corrupt to an extent worth mentioning? Isn't it rather the very men who say this who are the biggest sophists, who educate most perfectly and who turn out young and old, men and women, just the way they want them to be?"
>
> "But when do they do that?" he said.
>
> "When," I said, "many gathered together sit down in assemblies, courts, theaters, army camps, or any other common meeting of a multitude, and, with a great deal of uproar, blame some of the things said or done, and praise others, both in excess, shouting and clapping; and, besides, the rocks and the very place surrounding them echo and redouble the uproar of blame and praise. Now in such circumstances, as the saying goes, what do you suppose is the state of the young man's heart? Or what kind of private education will hold out for him and not be swept away by such blame and praise and go, borne by the flood, wherever it tends so that he'll say the same things are noble and base as they do, practice what they practice, and be such as they are?" (*Republic* 491e–492b)

They had learned from this old book what was going on and had gained real distance on it, had had an experience of liberation. Socrates' magic still worked. He had diagnosed the complaint of the ambitious young and showed how to treat it.

The sixties have now faded from the current student imagination. What remains is a certain self-promotion by people who took part in it all, now in their forties, having come to terms with the "establishment" but dispersing a nostalgic essence in the media, where, of course, many of them are flourishing, admitting that it was unreal but asserting that it was the moment of significance. They stood for the good things. They seem to think they were responsible for great progress in relations between whites and blacks, that they played the key role in the civil rights movement. Without attempting to discuss what was decisive in the historic changes that took place in those relations in the years between 1950 and 1970—whether it was the doings of the courts, or of elected officials, or inspiration of the kind represented by Martin Luther King from within the black community that was most important—it is undeniable that the enthusiastic support of these changes by university students in the North played some role in creating the atmosphere that promoted the righting

of old wrongs. But I believe the students' role was marginal and partook not a little of the histrionic morality of which I have been speaking. It consisted mostly in going off to marches and demonstrations that were vacationlike, usually during school term, with the confident expectation that they would not be penalized by their professors for missing assignments while they were off doing important deeds, in places where they had never been and to which they would never return, and where, therefore, they did not have to pay any price for their stand, as did those who had to stay and live there. Nor did they partake in the hard and low-profile labors of those who studied constitutional law and prepared legal briefs, those who spent lonely and frustrating years, whose lives were truly dedicated to a cause. I do not wish to denigrate the students' efforts, and people should not be blamed for inclinations that are truly good, although there should not be too much self-congratulation for what was easy and cost little. My point is, rather, that the student participation in the civil rights movement antedated the campus activism, and that the students' opinions were formed in the old, bad universities that they returned to destroy. The last significant student participation in the civil rights movement was in the march on Washington in 1964. After that, Black Power came to the fore, the system of segregation in the South was dismantled, and white students had nothing more to contribute other than to egg on Black Power excesses, the instigators of which did not want their help. The students were unaware that the teachings of equality, the promise of the Declaration of Independence, the study of the Constitution, the knowledge of our history and many more things were the painstakingly earned and stored-up capital that supported them. Racial justice is an imperative of our theory and historical practice, without which there would have been no problem and no solution. From what were claimed to be absolutely corrupt institutions serving "the system," students gained the awareness and learning that made their action possible and good. The most outrageous pretension of the students was that their commitments were their autonomous creations. Everything, but everything, was borrowed from the serious thought and beliefs about what America is and about good and bad in the university treasury. They could waste the capital because they did not know they were living off of it. They returned to the university, declared it bankrupt and thereby bankrupted it. They abandoned the grand American liberal traditions of learning. Under pressure from students the Founding was understood to be racist, and the very instrument that condemned slavery and racism was broken. The races in the Northern universities have grown more separate since the sixties. After the theory of the rights of man was no longer studied or really believed, its practice also suffered. The American university provided the intellectual inspiration for decent political deeds. It is very doubtful whether there is a teaching about justice within it now that could again generate anything like the movement toward racial equality. The very thing the sixties students prided themselves on was one of their premier victims.

THE STUDENT AND THE UNIVERSITY

Liberal Education

What image does a first-rank college or university present today to a teen-ager leaving home for the first time, off to the adventure of a liberal education? He has four years of freedom to discover himself—a space between the intellectual wasteland he has left behind and the inevitable dreary professional training that awaits him after the baccalaureate. In this short time he must learn that there is a great world beyond the little one he knows, experience the exhilaration of it and digest enough of it to sustain himself in the intellectual deserts he is destined to traverse. He must do this, that is, if he is to have any hope of a higher life. These are the charmed years when he can, if he so chooses, become anything he wishes and when he has the opportunity to survey his alternatives, not merely those current in his time or provided by careers, but those available to him as a human being. The importance of these years for an American cannot be overestimated. They are civilization's only chance to get to him.

In looking at him we are forced to reflect on what he should learn if he is to be called educated; we must speculate on what the human potential to be fulfilled is. In the specialties we can avoid such speculation, and the avoidance of them is one of specialization's charms. But here it is a simple duty. What are we to teach this person? The answer may not be evident, but to attempt to answer the question is already to philosophize and to begin to educate. Such a concern in itself poses the question

of the unity of man and the unity of the sciences. It is childishness to say, as some do, that everyone must be allowed to develop freely, that it is authoritarian to impose a point of view on the student. In that case, why have a university? If the response is "to provide an atmosphere for learning," we come back to our original questions at the second remove. Which atmosphere? Choices and reflection on the reasons for those choices are unavoidable. The university has to stand for something. The practical effects of unwillingness to think positively about the contents of a liberal education are, on the one hand, to ensure that all the vulgarities of the world outside the university will flourish within it, and, on the other, to impose a much harsher and more illiberal necessity on the student—the one given by the imperial and imperious demands of the specialized disciplines unfiltered by unifying thought.

The university now offers no distinctive visage to the young person. He finds a democracy of the disciplines—which are there either because they are autochthonous or because they wandered in recently to perform some job that was demanded of the university. This democracy is really an anarchy, because there are no recognized rules for citizenship and no legitimate titles to rule. In short there is no vision, nor is there a set of competing visions, of what an educated human being is. The question has disappeared, for to pose it would be a threat to the peace. There is no organization of the sciences, no tree of knowledge. Out of chaos emerges dispiritedness, because it is impossible to make a reasonable choice. Better to give up on liberal education and get on with a specialty in which there is at least a prescribed curriculum and a prospective career. On the way the student can pick up in elective courses a little of whatever is thought to make one cultured. The student gets no intimation that great mysteries might be revealed to him, that new and higher motives of action might be discovered within him, that a different and more human way of life can be harmoniously constructed by what he is going to learn.

Simply, the university is not distinctive. Equality for us seems to culminate in the unwillingness and incapacity to make claims of superiority, particularly in the domains in which such claims have always been made—art, religion and philosophy. When Weber found that he could not choose between certain high opposites—reason vs. revelation, Buddha vs. Jesus—he did not conclude that all things are equally good, that the distinction between high and low disappears. As a matter of fact he

intended to revitalize the consideration of these great alternatives in showing the gravity and danger involved in choosing among them; they were to be heightened in contrast to the trivial considerations of modern life that threatened to overgrow and render indistinguishable the profound problems the confrontation with which makes the bow of the soul taut. The serious intellectual life was for him the battleground of the great decisions, all of which are spiritual or "value" choices. One can no longer present this or that particular view of the educated or civilized man as authoritative; therefore one must say that education consists in knowing, really knowing, the small number of such views in their integrity. This distinction between profound and superficial—which takes the place of good and bad, true and false—provided a focus for serious study, but it hardly held out against the naturally relaxed democratic tendency to say, "Oh, what's the use?" The first university disruptions at Berkeley were explicitly directed against the multiversity smorgasbord and, I must confess, momentarily and partially engaged my sympathies. It may have even been the case that there was some small element of longing for an education in the motivation of those students. But nothing was done to guide or inform their energy, and the result was merely to add multilife-styles to multidisciplines, the diversity of perversity to the diversity of specialization. What we see so often happening in general happened here too; the insistent demand for greater community ended in greater isolation. Old agreements, old habits, old traditions were not so easily replaced.

Thus, when a student arrives at the university, he finds a bewildering variety of departments and a bewildering variety of courses. And there is no official guidance, no university-wide agreement, about what he *should* study. Nor does he usually find readily available examples, either among students or professors, of a unified use of the university's resources. It is easiest simply to make a career choice and go about getting prepared for that career. The programs designed for those having made such a choice render their students immune to charms that might lead them out of the conventionally respectable. The sirens sing *sotto voce* these days, and the young already have enough wax in their ears to pass them by without danger. These specialties can provide enough courses to take up most of their time for four years in preparation for the inevitable graduate study. With the few remaining courses they can do what they please, taking a bit of this and a bit of that. No public career these days—not doctor nor

lawyer nor politician nor journalist nor businessman nor entertainer—has much to do with humane learning. An education, other than purely professional or technical, can even seem to be an impediment. That is why a countervailing atmosphere in the university would be necessary for the students to gain a taste for intellectual pleasures and learn that they are viable.

The real problem is those students who come hoping to find out what career they want to have, or are simply looking for an adventure with themselves. There are plenty of things for them to do—courses and disciplines enough to spend many a lifetime on. Each department or great division of the university makes a pitch for itself, and each offers a course of study that will make the student an initiate. But how to choose among them? How do they relate to one another? The fact is they do not address one another. They are competing and contradictory, without being aware of it. The problem of the whole is urgently indicated by the very existence of the specialties, but it is never systematically posed. The net effect of the student's encounter with the college catalogue is bewilderment and very often demoralization. It is just a matter of chance whether he finds one or two professors who can give him an insight into one of the great visions of education that have been the distinguishing part of every civilized nation. Most professors are specialists, concerned only with their own fields, interested in the advancement of those fields in their own terms, or in their own personal advancement in a world where all the rewards are on the side of professional distinction. They have been entirely emancipated from the old structure of the university, which at least helped to indicate that they are incomplete, only parts of an unexamined and undiscovered whole. So the student must navigate among a collection of carnival barkers, each trying to lure him into a particular sideshow. This undecided student is an embarrassment to most universities, because he seems to be saying, "I am a whole human being. Help me to form myself in my wholeness and let me develop my real potential," and he is the one to whom they have nothing to say.

Cornell was, as in so many other things, in advance of its time on this issue. The six-year Ph.D. program, richly supported by the Ford Foundation, was directed specifically to high school students who had already made "a firm career choice" and was intended to rush them through to the start of those careers. A sop was given to desolate human-

ists in the form of money to fund seminars that these young careerists could take on their way through the College of Arts and Sciences. For the rest, the educators could devote their energies to arranging and packaging the program without having to provide it with any substance. That kept them busy enough to avoid thinking about the nothingness of their endeavor. This has been the preferred mode of not looking the Beast in the Jungle in the face—structure, not content. The Cornell plan for dealing with the problem of liberal education was to suppress the students' longing for liberal education by encouraging their professionalism and their avarice, providing money and all the prestige the university had available to make careerism the centerpiece of the university.

The Cornell plan dared not state the radical truth, a well-kept secret: the colleges do not have enough to teach their students, not enough to justify keeping them four years, probably not even three years. If the focus is careers, there is hardly one specialty, outside the hardest of the hard natural sciences, which requires more than two years of preparatory training prior to graduate studies. The rest is just wasted time, or a period of ripening until the students are old enough for graduate studies. For many graduate careers, even less is really necessary. It is amazing how many undergraduates are poking around for courses to take, without any plan or question to ask, just filling up their college years. In fact, with rare exceptions, the courses are parts of specialties and not designed for general cultivation, or to investigate questions important for human beings as such. The so-called knowledge explosion and increasing specialization have not filled up the college years but emptied them. Those years are impediments; one wants to get beyond them. And in general the persons one finds in the professions need not have gone to college, if one is to judge by their tastes, their fund of learning or their interests. They might as well have spent their college years in the Peace Corps or the like. These great universities—which can split the atom, find cures for the most terrible diseases, conduct surveys of whole populations and produce massive dictionaries of lost languages—cannot generate a modest program of general education for undergraduate students. This is a parable for our times.

There are attempts to fill the vacuum painlessly with various kinds of fancy packaging of what is already there—study abroad options, individualized majors, etc. Then there are Black Studies and Women's or

Gender Studies, along with Learn Another Culture. Peace Studies are on their way to a similar prevalence. All this is designed to show that the university is with it and has something in addition to its traditional specialties. The latest item is computer literacy, the full cheapness of which is evident only to those who think a bit about what literacy might mean. It would make some sense to promote literacy literacy, inasmuch as most high school graduates nowadays have difficulty reading and writing. And some institutions are quietly undertaking this worthwhile task. But they do not trumpet the fact, because this is merely a high school function that our current sad state of educational affairs has thrust upon them, about which they are not inclined to boast.

Now that the distractions of the sixties are over, and undergraduate education has become more important again (because the graduate departments, aside from the professional schools, are in trouble due to the shortage of academic jobs), university officials have had somehow to deal with the undeniable fact that the students who enter are uncivilized, and that the universities have some responsibility for civilizing them. If one were to give a base interpretation of the schools' motives, one could allege that their concern stems from shame and self-interest. It is becoming all too evident that liberal education—which is what the small band of prestigious institutions are supposed to provide, in contrast to the big state schools, which are thought simply to prepare specialists to meet the practical demands of a complex society—has no content, that a certain kind of fraud is being perpetrated. For a time the great moral consciousness alleged to have been fostered in students by the great universities, especially their vocation as gladiators who fight war and racism, seemed to fulfill the demands of the collective university conscience. They were doing something other than offering preliminary training for doctors and lawyers. Concern and compassion were thought to be the indefinable *X* that pervaded all the parts of the Arts and Sciences campus. But when that evanescent mist dissipated during the seventies, and the faculties found themselves face to face with ill-educated young people with no intellectual tastes—unaware that there even are such things, obsessed with getting on with their careers before having looked at life—and the universities offered no counterpoise, no alternative goals, a reaction set in.

Liberal education—since it has for so long been ill-defined, has none of the crisp clarity or institutionalized prestige of the professions, but

nevertheless perseveres and has money and respectability connected with it—has always been a battleground for those who are somewhat eccentric in relation to the specialties. It is in something like the condition of churches as opposed to, say, hospitals. Nobody is quite certain of what the religious institutions are supposed to do anymore, but they do have some kind of role either responding to a real human need or as the vestige of what was once a need, and they invite the exploitation of quacks, adventurers, cranks and fanatics. But they also solicit the warmest and most valiant efforts of persons of peculiar gravity and depth. In liberal education, too, the worst and the best fight it out, fakers vs. authentics, sophists vs. philosophers, for the favor of public opinion and for control over the study of man in our times. The most conspicuous participants in the struggle are administrators who are formally responsible for presenting some kind of public image of the education their colleges offer, persons with a political agenda or vulgarizers of what the specialties know, and real teachers of the humane disciplines who actually see their relation to the whole and urgently wish to preserve the awareness of it in their students' consciousness.

So, just as in the sixties universities were devoted to removing requirements, in the eighties they are busy with attempts to put them back in, a much more difficult task. The word of the day is "core." It is generally agreed that "we went a bit far in the sixties," and that a little fine-tuning has now become clearly necessary.

There are two typical responses to the problem. The easiest and most administratively satisfying solution is to make use of what is already there in the autonomous departments and simply force the students to cover the fields, i.e., take one or more courses in each of the general divisions of the university: natural science, social science and the humanities. The reigning ideology here is *breadth,* as was *openness* in the age of laxity. The courses are almost always the already existing introductory courses, which are of least interest to the major professors and merely assume the worth and reality of that which is to be studied. It is general education, in the sense in which a jack-of-all-trades is a generalist. He knows a bit of everything and is inferior to the specialist in each area. Students may wish to sample a variety of fields, and it may be good to encourage them to look around and see if there is something that attracts them in one of which they have no experience. But this is not a liberal education and does not

satisfy any longing they have for one. It just teaches that there is no high-level generalism, and that what they are doing is preliminary to the real stuff and part of the childhood they are leaving behind. Thus they desire to get it over with and get on with what their professors do seriously. Without recognition of important questions of common concern, there cannot be serious liberal education, and attempts to establish it will be but failed gestures.

It is a more or less precise awareness of the inadequacy of this approach to core curricula that motivates the second approach, which consists of what one might call composite courses. These are constructions developed especially for general-education purposes and usually require collaboration of professors drawn from several departments. These courses have titles like "Man in Nature," "War and Moral Responsibility," "The Arts and Creativity," "Culture and the Individual." Everything, of course, depends upon who plans them and who teaches them. They have the clear advantage of requiring some reflection on the general needs of students and force specialized professors to broaden their perspectives, at least for a moment. The dangers are trendiness, mere popularization and lack of substantive rigor. In general, the natural scientists do not collaborate in such endeavors, and hence these courses tend to be unbalanced. In short, they do not point beyond themselves and do not provide the student with independent means to pursue permanent questions independently, as, for example, the study of Aristotle or Kant as wholes once did. They tend to be bits of this and that. Liberal education should give the student the sense that learning must and can be both synoptic and precise. For this, a very small, detailed problem can be the best way, if it is framed so as to open out on the whole. Unless the course has the specific intention to lead to the permanent questions, to make the student aware of them and give him some competence in the important works that treat of them, it tends to be a pleasant diversion and a dead end—because it has nothing to do with any program of further study he can imagine. If such programs engage the best energies of the best people in the university, they can be beneficial and provide some of the missing intellectual excitement for both professors and students. But they rarely do, and they are too cut off from the top, from what the various faculties see as their real business. Where the power is determines the life of the whole body. And the intellectual problems unresolved at the top cannot be resolved administra-

tively below. The problem is the lack of any unity of the sciences and the loss of the will or the means even to discuss the issue. The illness above is the cause of the illness below, to which all the good-willed efforts of honest liberal educationists can at best be palliatives.

Of course, the only serious solution is the one that is almost universally rejected: the good old Great Books approach, in which a liberal education means reading certain generally recognized classic texts, just reading them, letting them dictate what the questions are and the method of approaching them—not forcing them into categories we make up, not treating them as historical products, but trying to read them as their authors wished them to be read. I am perfectly well aware of, and actually agree with, the objections to the Great Books cult. It is amateurish; it encourages an autodidact's self-assurance without competence; one cannot read all of the Great Books carefully; if one only reads Great Books, one can never know what a great, as opposed to an ordinary, book is; there is no way of determining who is to decide what a Great Book or what the canon is; books are made the ends and not the means; the whole movement has a certain coarse evangelistic tone that is the opposite of good taste; it engenders a spurious intimacy with greatness; and so forth. But one thing is certain: wherever the Great Books make up a central part of the curriculum, the students are excited and satisfied, feel they are doing something that is independent and fulfilling, getting something from the university they cannot get elsewhere. The very fact of this special experience, which leads nowhere beyond itself, provides them with a new alternative and a respect for study itself. The advantage they get is an awareness of the classic—particularly important for our innocents; an acquaintance with what big questions were when there were still big questions; models, at the very least, of how to go about answering them; and, perhaps most important of all, a fund of shared experiences and thoughts on which to ground their friendships with one another. Programs based upon judicious use of great texts provide the royal road to students' hearts. Their gratitude at learning of Achilles or the categorical imperative is boundless. Alexandre Koyré, the late historian of science, told me that his appreciation for America was great when—in the first course he taught at the University of Chicago, in 1940 at the beginning of his exile—a student spoke in his paper of Mr. Aristotle, unaware that he was not a contemporary. Koyré said that only an American could have

the naive profundity to take Aristotle as living thought, unthinkable for most scholars. A good program of liberal education feeds the student's love of truth and passion to live a good life. It is the easiest thing in the world to devise courses of study, adapted to the particular conditions of each university, which thrill those who take them. The difficulty is in getting them accepted by the faculty.

None of the three great parts of the contemporary university is enthusiastic about the Great Books approach to education. The natural scientists are benevolent toward other fields and toward liberal education, if it does not steal away their students and does not take too much time from their preparatory studies. But they themselves are interested primarily in the solution of the questions now important in their disciplines and are not particularly concerned with discussions of their foundations, inasmuch as they are so evidently successful. They are indifferent to Newton's conception of time or his disputes with Leibniz about calculus; Aristotle's teleology is an absurdity beneath consideration. Scientific progress, they believe, no longer depends on the kind of comprehensive reflection given to the nature of science by men like Bacon, Descartes, Hume, Kant and Marx. This is merely historical study, and for a long time now, even the greatest scientists have given up thinking about Galileo and Newton. Progress is undoubted. The difficulties about the truth of science raised by positivism, and those about the goodness of science raised by Rousseau and Nietzsche, have not really penetrated to the center of scientific consciousness. Hence, no Great Books, but incremental progress, is the theme for them.

Social scientists are in general hostile, because the classic texts tend to deal with the human things the social sciences deal with, and they are very proud of having freed themselves from the shackles of such earlier thought to become truly scientific. And, unlike the natural scientists, they are insecure enough about their achievement to feel threatened by the works of earlier thinkers, perhaps a bit afraid that students will be seduced and fall back into the bad old ways. Moreover, with the possible exception of Weber and Freud, there are no social science books that can be said to be classic. This may be interpreted favorably to the social sciences by comparing them to the natural sciences, which can be said to be a living organism developing by the addition of little cells, a veritable body of knowledge proving itself to be such by the very fact of this almost uncon-

scious growth, with thousands of parts oblivious to the whole, nevertheless contributing to it. This is in opposition to a work of imagination or of philosophy, where a single creator makes and surveys an artificial whole. But whether one interprets the absence of the classic in the social sciences in ways flattering or unflattering to them, the fact causes social scientists discomfort. I remember the professor who taught the introductory graduate courses in social science methodology, a famous historian, responding scornfully and angrily to a question I naively put to him about Thucydides with "Thucydides was a fool!"

More difficult to explain is the tepid reaction of humanists to Great Books education, inasmuch as these books now belong almost exclusively to what are called the humanities. One would think that high esteem for the classic would reinforce the spiritual power of the humanities, at a time when their temporal power is at its lowest. And it is true that the most active proponents of liberal education and the study of classic texts are indeed usually humanists. But there is division among them. Some humanities disciplines are just crusty specialties that, although they depend on the status of classic books for their existence, are not really interested in them in their natural state—much philology, for example, is concerned with the languages but not what is said in them—and will and can do nothing to support their own infrastructure. Some humanities disciplines are eager to join the real sciences and transcend their roots in the now overcome mythic past. Some humanists make the legitimate complaints about lack of competence in the teaching and learning of Great Books, although their criticism is frequently undermined by the fact that they are only defending recent scholarly interpretation of the classics rather than a vital, authentic understanding. In their reaction there is a strong element of specialist's jealousy and narrowness. Finally, a large part of the story is just the general debilitation of the humanities, which is both symptom and cause of our present condition.

To repeat, the crisis of liberal education is a reflection of a crisis at the peaks of learning, an incoherence and incompatibility among the first principles with which we interpret the world, an intellectual crisis of the greatest magnitude, which constitutes the crisis of our civilization. But perhaps it would be true to say that the crisis consists not so much in this incoherence but in our incapacity to discuss or even recognize it. Liberal education flourished when it prepared the way for the discussion of a

unified view of nature and man's place in it, which the best minds debated on the highest level. It decayed when what lay beyond it were only specialties, the premises of which do not lead to any such vision. The highest is the partial intellect; there is no synopsis.

The Decomposition of the University

This became all too clear in the aftermath of the guns at Cornell, and I had a chance to learn something about the articulation of the university as it decomposed. In general, no discipline—only individuals—reacted very well to the assault on academic freedom and integrity. But various disciplines reacted in characteristic ways. The professional schools —engineering, home economics, industrial-labor relations and agriculture —simply went home and closed the shutters. (Some professors in the law school did indeed express indignation, and a group of them finally spoke out publicly for the dismissal of the president.) These faculties were supposed, in general, to be conservative, but they just did not want trouble and did not feel it was their fight. The complaints of the black students were not about them; and whatever changes in thought were to take place, they would be untouched. In spite of the common complaints about the great variety of disciplines unbalancing the university and causing it to lose its focus, everyone knows that the arts and sciences faculty is where the action is, that the other schools are ancillary to it, that it is the center of learning and prestige. This much of the old order has been preserved. The challenge at Cornell was issued to the College of Arts and Sciences, as was the case everywhere throughout the sixties. The problem thus had to be faced by the natural sciences, the social sciences and the humanities. They were asked to change their content and their standards, to eliminate elitism, racism and sexism as "perceived" by students. But the community of scholars proved to be no community. There was no solidarity in defense of the pursuit of truth.

The natural scientists were above the battle, an island unto themselves, and did not feel threatened. I believe that only one natural scientist at Cornell spoke out against the presence of guns or the bullying of professors. The university's most famous professor, a Nobel prizewinning physicist, became a leading spokesman in defense of the president without

once consulting those professors whose lives had been threatened or posing the question of what was at stake. He deplored the violence but took no action or uttered any word indicating where a line should be drawn. As far as I know, none of the natural scientists was in cahoots with the thugs, as were some social scientists and humanists. It was the absolute independence of their work from the rest of the university's activity, and their trust that theirs is the important work, that made them indifferent. They did not share a common good with the rest of us. Walking to the meeting where the faculty capitulated to the students—a truly disgraceful event, a microcosm of cowardly acquiescence to the establishment of tyranny—in the company of a friend who had had to suffer the humiliation of leaving his home and hiding out with his family after receiving explicit threats, I heard a professor of biology loudly asking, perhaps for our benefit, "Do these social scientists really believe there is any danger?" My friend looked at me sadly and said, "With colleagues like that, you don't need enemies."

Because the student movements were so untheoretical, the natural sciences were not a target, as they had once been in high-grade fascism and communism. There were no Lenins thundering against positivism, relativity or genetics, no Goebbels alert to the falseness of Jewish science. There had been the beginnings of an offensive against the scientists' collaboration with the military-industrial complex, as well as their role in producing the technology that abets capitalism and pollutes the environment. But none of this went to the heart of the serious scientists' research. They were able to avoid the fury by distancing themselves from certain unpopular applications of their knowledge, by insulting the government which supported them, and by declaring themselves for peace and social justice. Here too the great Cornell physicist has, predictably, distinguished himself by making a habit of apologizing for physics' hand in producing thermonuclear weapons. But these scientists were not asked to change one thing in their studies, their classes or their laboratories. So they opted out.

This behavior was not merely selfishness and self-protectiveness, every man for himself, although there was a good deal of that, accompanied with the usual distasteful moralizing rhetoric. The atmosphere of crisis caused a not entirely conscious reassessment of natural science's relation to the university. Crises in the intellectual world as well as in the

political one tend to bring to the surface tensions and changes in interest that it is easier not to face as long as things are calm. To break old alliances and form new ones is always a painful business, as, for example, when liberals broke with Stalinists at the beginning of the Cold War. The scientists found themselves confronted with the fact that they had no real connection with the rest of the university, and that to cast their lot with it was costly. One cannot imagine that biologists would have been so callous if chemistry had somehow become a target for cultural revolution, and young Red Guards monitored its teachings and terrorized its practitioners. Chemists are biologists' blood relations, and their knowledge is absolutely indispensable for the progress of biology. But it is not now conceivable that a physicist qua physicist could learn anything important, or anything at all, from a professor of comparative literature or of sociology. The natural scientist's connection with the rest of humane learning is not familial but abstract, a little like our connection with humanity as a whole. There may be a formulaic invocation of rights applicable to all, but nothing that moves with the burning immediacy of shared convictions and interests. "I can live without you" is the silent thought that steals into one's mind when such relations become painful.

The reality of separateness has existed since Kant, the last philosopher who was a significant natural scientist, and Goethe, the last great literary figure who could believe that his contributions to science might be greater than his contributions to literature. And, it should be remembered, it was not that they were philosopher and poet who happened to dabble in science, but that their writings were mirrors of nature and that their science was guided and informed by meditation on being, freedom and beauty. They represented the last gasp of the old unity of the questions before natural science became the Switzerland of learning, safely neutral to the battles taking place on the darkling plain. Henry Adams—whose life bridged the last epoch when gentlemen, such as Jefferson, thought science both attainable and useful for them, and the one where scientists speak an incomprehensible language that teaches nothing about life but is necessary to life as information—takes note of this change in his quirky way. When he was young he had studied natural science and had given it up; when as an old man he looked again in that direction, he found that he was in a new world. The old university traditions and ideals had concealed the fact that the ancient bonds had decayed and the

marriage was washed up. The great scientists of the nineteenth century and twentieth century were in general cultivated men who had some experience of, and real admiration for, the other parts of learning. The increasing specialization of the natural sciences and the natural scientists gradually caused the protective fog to lift. Since the sixties the scientists have had less and less to say to, and to do with, their colleagues in the social sciences and humanities. The university has lost whatever polis-like character it had and has become like the ship on which the passengers are just accidental fellow travelers soon to disembark and go their separate ways. The relations between natural science, social science and humanities are purely administrative and have no substantial intellectual content. They only meet on the level of the first two years of undergraduate education, and there the natural scientists are largely concerned with protecting their interest in the young who will be coming their way.

A perfect illustration of this situation appeared a few years ago in a *New York Times* account of the visit of a professor of music to Rockefeller University. The life scientists working there brought bag lunches to the musicologist's lecture. The project was inspired by C. P. Snow's silly conceits about "the two cultures," the rift between which he proposed to heal by getting humanists to learn the second law of thermodynamics and physicists to read Shakespeare. This enterprise would, of course, be something other than an exercise in spiritual uplift only if the physicist learned something important for his physics from Shakespeare, and if the humanist similarly profited from the second law of thermodynamics. In fact, nothing of the sort ensues. For the scientist the humanities are recreation (often deeply respected by him, for he sees that more is needed than what he offers, but is puzzled about where to find it), and for the humanist the natural sciences are at best indifferent, at worst alien and hostile.

The *Times* quoted Joshua Lederberg, the president of Rockefeller University, from which philosophy had recently been banished, as saying after the lecture that C. P. Snow was on the right track but "counted wrong"—there are not two but many cultures, one example of which is that of the Beatles. This represents the ultimate trivialization of a trivial idea that was just a rest station on a downward slope. Lederberg saw in the humanities not the human knowledge that complements the study of nature but merely another expression of what was going on in the world. In the end, it is all more or less sophisticated show business. With a kind of wink at his audience Lederberg lets us know that in this sea of democratic relativism natural science stands out like Gibraltar. All the rest is a matter of taste.

This disposition affected the natural scientists' behavior at Cornell and everywhere else. In the attempt to use the admission of students and appointment of faculty as means for this or that social goal, which has lowered university standards and obscured the university's purpose, they cooperated with the new agenda, in their own way. They adopted the rhetoric of anti-elitism, antisexism and antiracism, and quietly resisted doing anything about the issues in their own domain. They passed the buck to the social scientists and the humanists, who proved more accommodating and could be more easily bullied. Natural scientists too are Americans, in general favorably disposed to the mood of the times. But they are also pretty sure of what they are doing. They cannot deceive themselves that they are teaching science when they are not. They have powerful operational measures of competence. And inwardly they believe, at least in my experience, that the only real knowledge is scientific knowledge. In the dilemma that faced them—mathematicians wanted, for example, to see more blacks and women hired but could not find nearly enough competent ones—they in effect said that the humanists and social scientists should hire them. Believing that there are no real standards outside of the natural sciences, they assumed that adjustments could easily be made. With the profoundest irresponsibility, scientists went along with various aspects of affirmative action, assuming, for example, that any minority students admitted without proper qualifications would be taken care of by other departments if they did not do well in science. The scientists did not anticipate large-scale failure of such students, with the really terrible consequences that would entail. They took it for granted that these students would succeed somewhere else in the university. And they were right. The humanities and social sciences were debauched and grade inflation took off, while the natural sciences remain largely the preserve of white males. Thus the true elitists of the university have been able to stay on the good side of the forces of history without having to suffer any of the consequences.

To find hysterical supporters of the revolution one had, not surprisingly, to go to the humanities. Passion and commitment, as opposed to coolness, reason and objectivity, found their home there. The drama

included a proclamation from a group of humanities teachers threatening to take over a building if the university did not capitulate forthwith. A student told me that one of his humanities professors, himself a Jew, had said to him that Jews deserved to be put in concentration camps because of what they had done to blacks. Finally these men and women were in action instead of idling away their time in libraries and classrooms. But they worked to their own undoing, for it is the humanities that have suffered most as a result of the sixties. The lack of student interest, the near disappearance of language study, the vanishing of jobs for Ph.D.s, the lack of public sympathy, came from the overturning of the old order, where their place was assured. They have gotten what they deserved, but we have unfortunately all lost.

The reasons for this behavior on the part of many humanists are obvious and constitute the theme of this book. Cornell was in the forefront of certain trends in the humanities as well as in politics. It had for several years been a laundering operation for radical Left French ideas in comparative literature. From Sartre, through Goldmann, to Foucault and Derrida, each successive wave washed over the Cornell shores. These ideas were intended to give new life to old books. A technique of reading, a framework for interpretation—Marx, Freud, structuralism, and on and on—could incorporate these tired old books and make them a part of revolutionary consciousness. At last there was an active, progressive role for the humanists, who had been only antiquarians, eunuchs guarding a harem of aging and now unattractive courtesans. Moreover, the almost universal historicism prevailing in the humanities prepared the soul for devotion to the emergent. Added to this was the expectation that in such changes culture would take primacy over science. The intellectual anti-university ideology of which I have spoken found its expression in these conditions, as the university could be thought to be the stage of history. Lucien Goldmann told me a few months before his death that he was privileged to have lived to see his nine-year-old son throw a rock through a store window in the Paris of '68. His studies of Racine and Pascal culminated in this. *Humanitas redivivas!* Students took to the action but not to the books. They could work on the future without the assistance of the past or its teachers. The avant-garde's fond expectation that the revolution would introduce an age of creativity, that art rather than antiquarianism would flower, that imagination would finally have its innings against reason, did not find immediate fulfillment.

The professors of humanities are in an impossible situation and do not believe in themselves or what they do. Like it or not, they are essentially involved with interpreting and transmitting old books, preserving what we call tradition, in a democratic order where tradition is not privileged. They are partisans of the leisured and beautiful in a place where evident utility is the only passport. Their realm is the always and the contemplative, in a setting that demands only the here and now and the active. The justice in which they believe is egalitarian, and they are the agents of the rare, the refined and the superior. By definition they are out of it, and their democratic inclinations and guilt push them to be with it. After all, what do Shakespeare and Milton have to do with solving our problems? Particularly when one looks into them and finds that they are the repositories of the elitist, sexist, nationalist prejudice we are trying to overcome.

Not only did the thing in itself require a conviction and dedication not often really present in the professors, the clientele was disappearing. The students just were not persuaded that what was being offered them was important. The loneliness and sense of worthlessness were crushing, so these humanists jumped on the fastest, most streamlined express to the future. This meant, of course, that all the tendencies hostile to the humanities were radicalized, and the humanities, without reservations, were pitched off the train. Natural and social science found their seats by demonstrating a usefulness of one kind or another. This the humanities were unable to do.

The apolitical character of the humanities, the habitual deformation or suppression of the political content in the classic literature, which should be part of a political education, left a void in the soul that could be filled with any politics, particularly the most vulgar, extreme and current. The humanities, unlike the natural sciences, had nothing to lose, or so it was thought, and, unlike the social sciences, they had no knowledge of the intractableness of the political matter. Humanists ran like lemmings into the sea, thinking they would refresh and revitalize themselves in it. They drowned.

This left the social sciences as the battleground, both the point of attack and the only place where any kind of stand was made. They were the newest part of the university, the part that could least boast of great past achievement or contribution to the store of human wisdom, the part the very legitimacy of which was questionable and where genius had

participated most modestly. But the social sciences were principally concerned with the human things, were supposed to be in possession of the facts about social life and had a certain scientific conscience and integrity about reporting them. The social sciences were of interest to everyone who had a program, who might care about prosperity, peace or war, equality, racial or sexual discrimination. This interest could be to get the facts—or to make the facts fit their agenda and influence the public.

The temptations to alter the facts in these disciplines are enormous. Reward, punishment, money, praise, blame, sense of guilt and desire to do good, all swirl around them, dizzying their practitioners. Everyone wants the story told by social science to fit their wishes and their needs. Hobbes said that if the fact that two and two makes four were to become a matter of political relevance, there would be a faction to deny it. Social science has had more than its share of ideologues and charlatans. But it has also produced scholars of great probity whose works have made it harder for dishonest policy to triumph.

Thus it was in social science that the radicals first struck. A group of black activists disrupted the class of an economics teacher, then proceeded to the chairman's office and held him and his secretary (who suffered from heart disease) hostage for thirteen hours. The charge, of course, was that the teacher was racist in using a Western standard for judgment of the efficiency of African economic performance. The students were praised for calling the problem to the attention of the authorities, the chairman refused to proffer charges against them, and the teacher disappeared miraculously from campus, never to be seen again.

This kind of problem-solving was typical, but some professors in the social sciences did not like it. Historians were being asked to rewrite the history of the world, and of the United States in particular, to show that nations were always conspiratorial systems of domination and exploitation. Psychologists were being pestered to prove the psychological damage done by inequality and the existence of nuclear weapons, and to show that American statesmen were paranoid about the Soviet Union. Political scientists were urged to interpret the North Vietnamese as nationalists and to remove the stigma of totalitarianism from the Soviet Union. Every conceivable radical view concerning domestic or foreign policy demanded support from the social sciences. In particular, the crimes of elitism, sexism and racism were to be exorcised from social science, which was to

be used as a tool to fight them and a fourth cardinal sin, anticommunism. Nobody of course would dare to admit to any of these sins, and serious discussion of the underlying issue, equality itself, had long been banished from the scene. As in the Middle Ages, when everyone except for a few intrepid and foolish souls professed Christianity and the only discussion concerned what constituted orthodoxy, the major student activity in social science was to identify heretics. These were scholars who seriously studied sexual differentiation or who raised questions about the educational value of busing or who considered the possibility of limited nuclear war. It became almost impossible to question the radical orthodoxy without risking vilification, classroom disruption, loss of the confidence and respect necessary for teaching, and the hostility of colleagues. Racist and sexist were, and are, very ugly labels—the equivalents of atheist or communist in other days with other prevailing prejudices—which can be pinned on persons promiscuously and which, once attached, are almost impossible to cast off. Nothing could be said with impunity. Such an atmosphere made detached, dispassionate study impossible.

This suited many social scientists, but a new, tougher strain emerged out of the struggle. Some saw that their objectivity was threatened, and without respect and protection for scholarly inquiry any one of them might be put at risk. The pressure revived an old liberalism and awareness of the importance of academic freedom. Pride and self-respect, unwillingness to give way before menace and insult, asserted themselves. These social scientists knew that all parties in a democracy are jeopardized when passion can sweep the facts before it. Most of all, an instinctive disgust at loudspeakers blaring propaganda was roused in them. Such social scientists were not necessarily all of the same personal political persuasion. Their fellow feeling consisted in mutual respect for the motives of colleagues with whom they did not always agree but from whose disagreement they might profit, and in attachment to the institutions that protected their research. At Cornell one found social scientists of left, right and center—on the admittedly narrow spectrum that prevails in the American university—joining together to protest the outrage against academic freedom and against their colleagues that took place there and continues in more or less subtle forms everywhere. It is not an accident that the challenge to the university was mounted in its most political part, and that there it was best understood. The political perspective is the one

in which the moral unity of learning naturally comes into focus and the goodness of science is tested.

I unfortunately cannot assert that this crisis has caused social science to broaden its concerns or has induced the other disciplines to reflect on their own situations. But it was inspiring to be momentarily with a band of scholars who were really willing to make a sacrifice for their love of truth and their studies, to discover that the pieties could be more than pieties, to sense community founded on conviction. The other disciplines have, in general, not put their professed attachment to free inquiry to the test. Their immunity is a large part of the story behind the fractured structure of our universities.

The Disciplines

How are they today, the big three that rule the academic roost and determine what is knowledge? Natural science is doing just fine. Living alone, but happily, running along like a well-wound clock, successful and useful as ever. There have been great things lately, physicists with their black holes and biologists with their genetic code. Its objects and methods are agreed upon. It offers exciting lives to persons of very high intelligence and provides immeasurable benefits to mankind at large. Our way of life is utterly dependent on the natural scientists, and they have more than fulfilled their every promise. Only at the margins are there questions that might threaten their theoretical equanimity—doubts about whether America produces synoptic scientific geniuses, doubts about the use of the results of science, such as nuclear weapons, doubts that lead to biology's need for "ethicists" in its experiments and its applications when, as scientists, they know that there are no such knowers as ethicists. In general, however, all is well.

But where natural science ends, trouble begins. It ends at man, the one being outside of its purview, or to be exact, it ends at that part or aspect of man that is not body, whatever that may be. Scientists as scientists can be grasped only under that aspect, as is the case with politicians, artists and prophets. All that is human, all that is of concern to us, lies outside of natural science. That should be a problem for natural science, but it is not. It is certainly a problem for us that we do not know

what this thing is, that we cannot even agree on a name for this irreducible bit of man that is not body. Somehow this fugitive thing or aspect is the cause of science and society and culture and politics and economics and poetry and music. We know what these latter are. But can we really, if we do not know their cause, know what its status is, whether it even exists?

The difficulty is reflected in the fact that for the study of this one theme, man, or this *je ne sais quoi* pertaining to man, and his activities and products, there are two great divisions of the university—humanities and social science—while for bodies there is only natural science. This would all be very well if the division of labor were founded on an agreement about the subject matter and reflected a natural articulation within it, as do the divisions between physics, chemistry and biology, leading to mutual respect and cooperation. It could be believed and is sometimes actually said, mostly in commencement speeches, that social science treats man's social life, and humanities his creative life—the great works of art, etc. And, although there is something to this kind of distinction, it really will not do. This fact comes to light in a variety of ways. While both social science and humanities are more or less willingly awed by natural science, they have a mutual contempt for one another, the former looking down on the latter as unscientific, the latter regarding the former as philistine. They do not cooperate. And most important, they occupy much of the same ground. Many of the classic books now part of the humanities talk about the same things as do social scientists but use different methods and draw different conclusions; and each of the social sciences in one way or another attempts to explain the activities of the various kinds of artists in ways that are contrary to the way they are treated in the humanities. The difference comes down to the fact that social science really wants to be predictive, meaning that man is predictable, while the humanities say that he is not. The divisions between the two camps resemble truce lines rather than scientific distinctions. They disguise old and unresolved struggles about the being of man.

The social sciences and the humanities represent the two responses to the crisis caused by the definitive ejection of man—or of the residue of man extracted from, or superfluous to, body—from nature, and hence from the purview of natural science or natural philosophy, toward the end of the eighteenth century. One route led toward valiant efforts to assimilate man to the new natural sciences, to make the science of man the next

rung in the ladder down from biology. The other took over the territory newly opened up by Kant, that of freedom as opposed to nature, separate but equal, not requiring the aping of the methods of natural science, taking spirituality at least as seriously as body. Neither challenged the champion, natural science, newly emancipated from philosophy: social science tried humbly to find a place at court, humanities proudly to set up shop next door. The result has been two continuous and ill-assorted strands of thought about man, one tending to treat him essentially as another of the brutes, without spirituality, soul, self, consciousness, or what have you; the other acting as though he is not an animal or does not have a body. There is no junction of these two roads. One must choose between them, and they end up in very different places, e.g., Walden II, known as Brave New World by the other side, and The Blessed Isles (a favorite retreat of Zarathustra), known as The Kingdom of Darkness by its opponents.

Neither of these solutions has fully succeeded. Social science receives no recognition from natural science.[13] It is an imitation, not a part. And the humanities shop has turned out to be selling diverse and ill-assorted antiques, decaying and ever dustier, while business gets worse and worse. Social science has proved more robust, more in harmony with the world dominated by natural science, and, while losing its inspiration and evangelical fervor, has proved useful to different aspects of modern life, as the mere mention of economics and psychology indicates. Humanities languish, but this proves only that they do not suit the modern world. It may very well be the indication of what is wrong with modernity. Moreover the language that in an unscholarly way influences life so powerfully today emerged from investigations undertaken in the realm of freedom. Social science comes more out of the school founded by Locke; humanities out

[13]Natural science simply does not care. There is no hostility (unless it is attacked) to anything that is going on elsewhere. It is really self-sufficient, or almost so. If some other discipline proved itself, satisfied natural science's standards of rigor and proof, it would be automatically admitted. Natural science does not boast, is not snobbish. It is genuine. As Swift pointed out, its only habitual and apparently necessary sortie from its own proper domain is into politics. This is where it itself, if only in confused fashion, recognizes that it is a part of a larger project, and that it is dependent on that project, which is not a product of its methods. Lowly, despised politics points toward the need for philosophy, as Socrates originally said, in such a way that even scientists have to admit it. Natural scientists have no respect for political science as a science, but they have a passionate concern for politics. This is a beginning point for rethinking everything. Is the danger of nuclear war or the imprisonment of Sakharov just an accident?

of that founded by Rousseau. But social science, while looking to natural science, has actually received a large part of its impulse in recent times from the nether world. One need only think of Weber, although Marx and Freud are similar cases. It cannot be avowed, but *man,* to be grasped, needs something the natural sciences cannot provide. Man is the problem, and we live with various stratagems for not facing it. The strange relations between the three divisions of knowledge in the present university tell us all about it.

To look at social science first, it might seem that it at least has a general outline of its field and a possible systematic ordering of its parts, proceeding from psychology to economics to sociology to political science. Unfortunately there is nothing to this appearance. In the first place, it leaves out anthropology, although I suppose that if I were desperate to make a case I could find a way of squeezing it in; and it also leaves out history, about which there is dispute as to whether it belongs to social science or humanities. More important, these various social sciences do not see themselves in any such order of interdependence. Largely they work independently, and if they, to use that hopeless expression, "interface" at all, they frequently turn out to be two-faced. Within most of the specialties, about half of the practitioners usually do not believe the other half even belong among them, and something of the same situation prevails throughout the discipline as a whole. Economics has its own simple built-in psychology, and that provided by the science of psychology is either really part of biology, which does not help much, or flatly contradicts the primacy of the motives alleged by economics. Similarly, economics tends to undermine the normal interpretation of political events that political science would make. It is possible to have an economics-guided or -controlled political science, but it is not necessary; and it is equally possible to have a psychology-guided political science, which would not be the same as the former. It is as though there were a dispute among the various natural sciences about which is primary. Actually each of the social sciences can, and does, make a claim to be the beginning point in relation to which the others can be understood—economics arguing for the economy or the market, psychology for the individual psyche, sociology for society, anthropology for culture, and political science for the political order (although this latter is the least assertive about its claim).

The issue is what is the social science atom, and each specialty can argue that the others are properly parts of the whole that it represents. Moreover each can accuse the other of representing an abstraction, or a construct, or a figment of the imagination. Is there ever a pure market, one not part of a society or a culture that forms it? What is a culture or society? Are they ever more than aspects of some kind of political order? Here political science is in the strongest position, because the reality of states or nations is undeniable, although they can in turn be considered superficial or compound phenomena. The social sciences actually represent a series of different perspectives on the human world we see around us, a series that is not harmonious, because there is not even agreement as to what belongs to that world, let alone as to what kinds of causes would account for its phenomena.

A further source of dispute within social science concerns what is meant by science. All agree that it must be reasonable, have some standards of verification and be based on systematic research. Moreover, there is a more or less explicit agreement that the kinds of causes admitted within natural science should somehow apply within social science. This means no teleology and no "spiritual" causes. Pursuit of salvation would, for example, need to be reduced to another kind of cause, like repressed sexuality, whereas pursuit of money would not. Search for material causes and reduction of higher or more complex phenomena to lower or simpler ones are generally accepted procedures. But to what extent the example of the most successful of the modern natural sciences, mathematical physics, can or should be followed within social science is a matter of endless discussion and quarreling. Prediction is the hallmark of modern natural science, and practically every social scientist would like to be able to make reliable predictions, although practically none have. Prediction appears to have been made possible in natural science by reducing phenomena in such a way as to be amenable to expression in mathematical formulas, and most social scientists want the same thing to happen in their discipline. The issue is whether various efforts in that direction cause distortion of the social phenomena, or lead to the neglect of some that are not easily mathematized and the preference for others that are; or whether they encourage the construction of mathematical models that are figments of the imagination and have nothing to do with the real world. A kind of continuous guerrilla war goes on between those who are primarily enthusiasts of science and those who are primarily attached to their particular subject matter.

Economics, held to be the most successful of the social sciences, is the most mathematized—both in the sense that its objects can be counted and that it can construct mathematical models for at least hypothetically predictive purposes. But some political scientists, for example, say that the Economic Man may be very nice for playing games with but that he is an abstraction who does not exist, while Hitler and Stalin are real and not to be played with. Economic analysis, they say, not only does not help us to understand such political actors but makes it more difficult to bring them within the purview of social science by systematically excluding or deforming their specific motives. Economists, seeking mathematical convenience, turn us away from the consideration of the most important social phenomena, assert the objectors (including the small, vociferous band of Marxist economists who are rigorously excluded from the core of the discipline, the only social science in which this has happened). So it goes between the various disciplines and within several of them where the adherents of the different approaches have no common universe of discourse.

Publicity aside, what students actually see today when they first encounter social science are two robust, self-sufficient, self-confident social sciences, economics and cultural anthropology, extremes forming the antipodes, having almost nothing to do with each other—while political science and sociology, quite heterogenous, not to say chaotic in their contents, are strung tensely between the two poles.[14] It should not be surprising that these two disciplines are more explicit than are the other social sciences about their founders: Locke and Adam Smith, on the one hand, and Rousseau on the other. For these sciences have as their clear presuppositions one or the other of the two states of nature. Locke argued

[14]Psychology is mysteriously disappearing from the social sciences. Its unheard-of success in the real world may have tempted it to give up the theoretical life. As the psychotherapist has taken his place alongside the family doctor, perhaps his education now belongs to something more akin to the medical school than to the sciences, and the research relevant for him is more directed to treatment of specific problems of patients than to the founding of a theory of the psyche. The Freudian theories have been incorporated into some aspects of sociology, political science and anthropology, and it appears that the self alone had nothing more to tell the social sciences. This leaves open the question of what the solid ground is on which therapy stands, and where its newer ideas come from. Serious academic psychology is left with the segment that has to all intents and purposes fused with physiology.

that man's conquest of nature by his work is the only rational response to his original situation. Locke emancipated greed and showed the illusory character of the countervailing motives. Life, liberty and the pursuit of property are the fundamental natural rights, and the social contract is made to protect these rights. These principles agreed upon, economics comes into being as *the* science of man's proper activity, and the free market as the natural and rational order (a natural order unlike other recognized natural orders in that it requires establishment by men, and they, as economists are constantly telling us, almost always get it wrong). Economists have in general stuck to this, are in general old liberals of one kind or another and supporters of liberal democracy, as the place where the market exists. Rousseau argued that nature is good and man far away from it. So the quest for those faraway origins becomes imperative, and anthropology is by that very fact founded. Lévi-Strauss is unambiguous about this. Civilization, practically identical to the free market and its results, threatens happiness and dissolves community. From this follows immediately admiration for tight old cultures that channel and sublimate the economic motive and do not permit the emergence of the free market. What economists believe to be things of the irrational past—known only as underdeveloped societies[15]—become the proper study of man, a diagnosis of our ills and a call to the future. Anthropologists have tended to be very open to many aspects of the Continental reflection, from culture on down, to which economists were completely closed (Nietzsche's influence was already evident more than fifty years ago in Ruth Benedict's distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian cultures); they have tended to the Left (because the extreme Right, equally viable in their system, had no roots here) and to be susceptible to infatuations with experiments tending to correct or replace liberal democracy. Economists teach that the market is the fundamental social phenomenon, and its culmination is money. Anthropologists teach that culture is the fundamental social phenomenon, and its culmination is the sacred.[16] Such is

[15]Undeveloped, bad; developing, better; developed, good—for man and for the science of economics.

[16]I am tempted to say that psychology teaches that sex is the primary phenomenon. It is closer to economics when understood as stimulus-response, closer to anthropology when understood as a hang-up. If one wants something more from psychology, one meets a road sign saying "To the Humanities."

the confrontation—man the producer of consumption goods vs. man the producer of culture, the maximizing animal vs. the reverent one—between old philosophic teachings present here but not addressed. The disciplines simply inhabit different worlds. They can be of marginal use to one another, but not in a spirit of community. There are few economists who also think of themselves as anthropologists, and vice versa, although there are, for example, many political scientists and sociologists who cross one another's borders, as well as those of economics and anthropology. The economists are the ones most ready to jump the social science ship and go it on their own, and think themselves closer than the others to having achieved a real science. They also have substantial influence on public policy. The anthropologists have no such influence beyond the academic world but have the charms of depth and comprehensiveness, as well as the possession of the latest ideas.

A few words about political science and its peculiarities might help to clarify the problems of social science as a whole. To begin with, it is, along with economics, the only purely academic discipline that, like medicine, engages a fundamental passion and the study of which could be understood as undertaken in order to ensure its satisfaction. Political science involves the love of justice, the love of glory and the love of ruling. But unlike medicine and economics, which are quite frank about their relations to health and wealth, and even trumpet them, political science turns modestly away from such avowals and would even like to break off these unseemly relations. This has something to do with the fact that she is a very old lady indeed, who would prefer not to show her age. Political science goes all the way back to Greek antiquity and has the dubious parentage of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, all with bad reputations in the land of modern science. The other social sciences are of modern origin and part of the modern project, while political science persists, trying to modernize and get with it but unable entirely to control old instincts. Aristotle said that political science is the architectonic science, a ruling science, concerned with the comprehensive good or the best regime. But real science does not talk about good and bad, so that had to be abandoned. However, both medicine and economics really do talk about good and bad, so the abandonment of the old political goods had the effect only of leaving the moral field to health and wealth in the absence of the common good and justice. This accords with Locke's intention, which was

not at all "value-free," but was to substitute lower but more solid, more easily attained goods for those that had been classically proposed. Political science's transformation into a modern social science did not further social science but did further the political intentions of modernity's founders. It has tried to reduce the specifically political motives into subpolitical ones, like those proposed in economics. Honor is not a real motive; gain is.

Of course Locke himself was still much more a political scientist than an economist, for the market (the peaceful competition for the acquisition of goods) requires the prior existence of the social contract (the agreement to abide by contracts and the establishment of a judge to arbitrate and enforce contracts) without which men are in a state of war. The market presupposes the existence of law and the absence of war. War was the condition of man prior to the existence of civil society, and the return to it is always possible. The force and fraud required to end war have nothing to do with the market and are illegitimate within it. The rational behavior of men at peace, in which economics specializes, is not the same as the rational behavior of men at war, as was so tellingly pointed out by Machiavelli. Political science is more comprehensive than economics because it studies both peace and war and their relations. The market cannot be the sole concern of the polity, for the market depends on the polity, and the establishment and preservation of the polity continuously requires reasonings and deeds which are "uneconomic" or "inefficient." Political action must have primacy over economic action, no matter what the effect on the market. This is why economists have had so little reliable to say about foreign policy, for nations are in the primitive state of war with each other that individuals were in prior to the social contract—that is, they have no commonly recognized judge to whom they can turn to settle their disputes. The policy advice of some economists during the Vietnam war attempted to set up a kind of market between the United States and North Vietnam, with the United States making the cost of South Vietnam prohibitive to North Vietnam; but the North Vietnamese refused to play. Political science, as opposed to economics, must always contemplate war with its altogether different risks, horrors, thrills, and gravity. Churchill formulated the difference between a political perspective and a market perspective in commenting on Coolidge's refusal to forgive the British war debts in the twenties. Coolidge said, "They hired the money,

didn't they?" To which Churchill responded, "This is true, but not exhaustive." Political science must be exhaustive and this makes it a sticky subject for those who want to reform it so as to accord with the abstract projects of science. Consciously or unconsciously, economics deals only with the bourgeois, the man motivated by fear of violent death. The warlike man is not within its ken. Political science remains the only social science discipline which looks war in the face.

Political science has always been the least attractive and the least impressive of the social sciences, spanning as it does old and new views of man and the human sciences. It has a polyglot character. Part of it has joined joyfully in the effort to dismantle the political order seen as a comprehensive order and to understand it as a result of subpolitical causes. Economics, psychology and sociology as well as all kinds of methodological diagnosticians have been welcome guests. But there are irrepressible, putatively unscientific parts of political science. The practitioners of these parts of the discipline are unable to overcome their unexplained and unexplainable political instincts—their awareness that politics is the authoritative arena of effective good and evil. They therefore engage in policy studies whose end, whether it is stated or not, is action. Defense of freedom, avoidance of war, the furthering of equality—various aspects of justice in action—are hot subjects of study. The good regime has to be the theme of such political scientists, if only undercover, and they are informed by the question "What is to be done?" And, in a real peripety, it turns out that the area of political science where mathematics has had the greatest success is elections, the most exciting and decisive part of democratic life, where public opinion turns into government and policy. The most scientific element of political science is one that makes its practitioners friends and allies of real politicians, enlightening them and learning from them. Science here parallels the greatest political thrills and has no need of changing the perceived nature of its object to study it scientifically.

So political science resembles a rather haphazard bazaar with shops kept by a mixed population. This has something to do with its hybrid nature and its dual origins in antiquity and modernity. The reality with which it deals lends itself less to abstractions and makes more urgent demands than do any of the other social science disciplines, while the tension between objectivity and partisanship in it is much more extreme.

Everything in modern natural and social science militates against the assertion that politics is qualitatively different from other kinds of human association, but its practice repeatedly affirms the contrary. Its heterogeneity is perhaps debilitating, and one finds here choice theorists of the economic-models school, old-fashioned behavioralists, Marxists (who are never at home in economics), historians and policy researchers. Most unusual of all, political science is the only discipline in the university (with the possible exception of the philosophy department) that has a philosophic branch. This has long been an embarrassment to it, and political philosophy was scheduled for termination in the forties and fifties. "We want to be a real social science," cried the terminators with an exasperated stamp of the foot. But a combination of serious and fervent scholarship on the part of a few thinkers and the muscle of the rebellious students in the sixties gave political philosophy a reprieve that now looks permanent. It became, for the best and the worst of reasons, the bastion of the reaction against value-free social science and the new social science as a whole. It has, where its presence is at all serious, proved to be continuously the most attractive subject in the field for both graduate and undergraduate students. And as the new scientific persuasion has lost much of its élan and the field has fragmented in various directions dictated at least partly by fidelity to the political phenomena, many of those who were once fierce enemies of political philosophy have become its allies. Political philosophy is far from ruling, but it provides at least a reminiscence of those old questions about good and evil and the resources for examining the hidden presuppositions of modern political science and political life. Aristotle's *Politics* is still alive there, as well as Locke's *Treatise on Civil Government* and Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality.* Aristotle asserts that man is by nature a political animal, which means that he has an impulse toward civil society. Reading Aristotle helps to lay bare the hidden premise underlying modern social science, that man is by nature a solitary being, and could provide the basis for making a debate of it again.[17]

[17]History, sharing Greek origins with political science, also has elements of the ancients-moderns identity crisis, in addition to the other problems of the strictly modern social sciences. As already mentioned, both participants and observers are unsure whether it is a social science or one of the humanities. Its matter is resistant to the techniques of the behavioral sciences, since it is particular, and therefore not easily generalizable, deals with the past, and is therefore beyond

Obviously, then, the glory days of social science from the point of view of liberal education are over. Gone is the time when Marx, Freud and Weber, philosophers and interpreters of the world, were just precursors of what was to be America's intellectual coming of age, when youngsters could join the charms of science and self-knowledge, when there was the expectation of a universal theory of man that would unite the university and contribute to progress, harnessing Europe's intellectual depth and heritage with our vitality. Natural science was to culminate in human science; Darwin and Einstein would tell social science as much as they had told natural science. And modern literature—Dostoyevski, Joyce, Proust, Kafka—expressed our mood and provided the insights that social science would systematize and prove. Psychoanalysis provided the link between private experience and public intellectual endeavor. So unified was the experience that personal desire was intimately connected with intuition of the comprehensive order of things, a simulacrum of the old understanding of philosophy as a way of life. On a much less sophisticated level but expressing something of the same ethos, Margaret Mead had a new science that took one to exotic places, brought back new understandings of society and also proved the legitimacy of one's repressed sexual desires. To young people, the sociologists and psychologists who trod the university's grounds could look like heroes of the life of the mind. They were

controlled experiments; but it does not want to be merely literature. I believe that none of the other social sciences includes history as part of the social science schema, with the exception of that part of political science which is concerned with political practice as opposed to social science, e.g., some aspects of American politics and of international relations. History until the nineteenth century meant primarily political history; and it, unlike political science, was not refounded in early modernity. Its traditional role was enhanced during the new foundings because it told what happened, as opposed to old political science, which told what ought to have happened. Therefore history was understood to be closer to the truth of things. History had to wait until the nineteenth century for its modernization by historicism, which argued, as it were, that being, certainly man's being, is essentially historical. Historicism appears to have been a great boon for history, a radical step upward in status. But the appearance is somewhat deceptive. Historicism is a philosophical, not a historical, teaching, one not discovered by history. Rather than the prestige of philosophy adhering to history, the reverse occurred. All humanities disciplines are now historical—not philosophy, but history of philosophy, not art, but history of art, not science, but history of science, not literature, but history of literature. Thus history is all of these, but also none of them, because they are discrete disciplines in the humanities. History became the empty, universal category encompassing all the humanities, except insofar as it remained its modest, narrow political self. But because it does not have an anchor in political passion as does political science, it could float easily away from that dock under the influence of the prevailing winds, as politics was depreciated by so many other things, especially historicism. So, history, a wonderful, useful study, full of most learned individuals, is as a whole a medley of methods and goals, six disciplines in search of a self-definition.

initiated into the mysteries and might help us to become initiates too. Old-style philosophy had been overcome, but names like Hegel, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard were thought to offer some of the experience required for our adventure.

Such an atmosphere as surrounded social science in the forties was obviously of ambiguous value for both students and professors. But something akin to it is necessary if American students are to be attracted to the idea of liberal education and the awareness that the university will cause them to discover new faculties in themselves and reveal another level of existence that had been hidden from them. American students, it must be remembered, if they have learned anything at all in high school, have learned natural science as a technique, not as a way of life or a means of discovering life. If anything other than routine specialized learning is to touch them, they must be given a shock treatment—even if it is only to make them think about their commitment to natural science and its meaning, inasmuch as their earlier training has been more of an indoctrination, more of a conformism, than the discovery of a vocation. The social science inebriation of the forties was not, I believe, the genuine article, but it reproduced something of the intellectual excitement surrounding theoretical new beginnings. It proved fertile for many students and scholars, generated its own ancillary bohemia and affected the substance of people's lives. It was not just a profession.

The hopes for a unity of social science have faded, and it cannot present a common front. It is a series of discrete disciplines and subdisciplines. Most are modest, and although there is a lot of nonsense, there are also a fair number of really useful parts practiced by highly competent specialists. The expectations are radically lowered. Economics is a specialty that has universal pretensions to explain and encompass everything, but they are not quite believed, and its popularity does not rest on them. Political science does not even try to make good its ancestral claim to comprehensiveness and only covertly and partially makes its special and rightful appeal to the political passion. Anthropology is the only social science discipline still exercising the charm of possible wholeness, with its idea of culture, which appears more really complete than does the economists' idea of the market. Both the superpolitical cultural part and the subpolitical economic part claim to be the whole, while neither sociology nor political science, apart from certain individuals, really seems to make

any claims over the whole social science enterprise. There is no social science as an architectonic science. It is parts without a whole.

Similarly, with the possible exceptions of computer science as a model for man, and sociobiology, the expectation of substantive unity between natural science and social science has faded, leaving social science a consumer only of natural science method. Gone is the cosmic intention of placing man in the universe. In the direction of the humanities, it is again only anthropology that has maintained a certain opening, particularly to the merchandise being hawked in comparative literature, but also to serious studies, e.g., Greek religion. No other social scientists expect to get much from nineteenth- and twentieth-century art and literature, which fascinated many significant social scientists a generation ago, and there are fewer and fewer social scientists who have much familiarity with that sort of thing in a personal way. The social sciences have become an island in the university floating alongside the other two islands, full of significant information and hiding treasures of great questions that could be mined but are not. Notably, the social science intellectual in the German or French mold, looked upon as a kind of sage or wise man who could tell all about life, has all but disappeared.

The students are aware of this and do not turn to the social sciences in general for the experience of conversion. Particular things or particular professors may be of interest to them for one reason or another, but for any who might happen to be looking for the meaning of life, or who might be able to learn that that is what they should look for, social science is not now the place to go. Anthropology, to repeat myself, is something of an exception. The secret of social science's great early success with intelligent young Americans was that it was the only place in the university that seemed, however indirectly, to seek the answer to the Socratic question of how one should live. Even when it was most vigorously teaching that values cannot be the subject matter of knowledge, that very teaching taught about life, as shown by such once exciting contrivances as Weber's distinction between the ethics of intention and the ethics of responsibility. This was not textbook learning, but the real stuff of life. Nothing like this is to be found there today.

Moreover, a great disaster has occurred. It is the establishment during the last decade or so of the MBA as the moral equivalent of the MD or the law degree, meaning a way of insuring a lucrative living by the

mere fact of a diploma that is not a mark of scholarly achievement. It is a general rule that the students who have any chance of getting a liberal education are those who do not have a fixed career goal, or at least those for whom the university is not merely a training ground for a profession. Those who do have such a goal go through the university with blinders on, studying what the chosen discipline imposes on them while occasionally diverting themselves with an elective course that attracts them. True liberal education requires that the student's whole life be radically changed by it, that what he learns may affect his action, his tastes, his choices, that no previous attachment be immune to examination and hence re-evaluation. Liberal education puts everything at risk and requires students who are able to risk everything.[18] Otherwise it can only touch what is uncommitted in the already essentially committed. The effect of the MBA is to corral a horde of students who want to get into business school and to put the blinders on them, to legislate an illiberal, officially approved undergraduate program for them at the outset, like premeds who usually disappear into their required courses and are never heard from again. Both the goal and the way of getting to it are fixed so that nothing can distract them. (Prelaw students are more visible in a variety of liberal courses because law schools are less fixed in their prerequisites; they are only seeking bright students.) Premed, prelaw and prebusiness students are distinctively tourists in the liberal arts. Getting into those elite professional schools is an obsessive concern that tethers their minds.

The specific effect of the MBA has been an explosion of enrollments in economics, the prebusiness major. In serious universities something like 20 percent of the undergraduates are now economics majors. Economics overwhelms the rest of the social sciences and skews the students' perception of them—their purpose and their relative weight with regard to the knowledge of human things. A premed who takes much biology does not, by contrast, lose sight of the status of physics, for the latter's influence on biology is clear, its position agreed upon, and it is respected by the biologists. None of this is so for the prebusiness economics major, who not only does not take an interest in sociology, anthropology or political

[18]It is to be noted that many students who come to the university intending to go into natural science change their intention while in college. It never, or almost never, happens that a student who was not interested in natural science before college discovers it there. This is an interesting reflection on the character of our high school education in general and science education in particular.

science but is also persuaded that what he is learning can handle all that belongs to those studies. Moreover, he is not motivated by love of the science of economics but by love of what it is concerned with—money. Economists' concern with wealth, an undeniably real and solid thing, gives them a certain impressive intellectual solidity not provided by, say, culture. One can be sure that they are not talking about nothing. But wealth, as opposed to the science of wealth, is not the noblest of motivations, and there is nothing else quite like this perfect coincidence between science and cupidity elsewhere in the university. The only parallel would be if there were a science of sexology, with earnest and truly scholarly professors, which would ensure its students lavish sexual satisfactions.

The third island of the university is the almost submerged old Atlantis, the humanities. In it there is no semblance of order, no serious account of what should and should not belong, or of what its disciplines are trying to accomplish or how. It is somehow the repair of man or of humanity, the place to go to find ourselves now that everyone else has given up. But where to look in this heap or jumble? It is difficult enough for those who already know what to look for to get any satisfaction here. For students it requires a powerful instinct and a lot of luck. The analogies tumble uncontrollably from my pen. The humanities are like the great old Paris Flea Market where, amidst masses of junk, people with a good eye found castaway treasures that made them rich. Or they are like a refugee camp where all the geniuses driven out of their jobs and countries by unfriendly regimes are idling, either unemployed or performing menial tasks. The other two divisions of the university have no use for the past, are forward-looking and not inclined toward ancestor worship.

The problem of the humanities, and therefore of the unity of knowledge, is perhaps best represented by the fact that if Galileo, Kepler and Newton exist anywhere in the university now it is in the humanities, as part of one kind of history or another—history of science, history of ideas, history of culture. In order to have a place, they have to be understood as something other than what they were—great contemplators of the whole of nature who understood themselves to be of interest only to the extent that they told the truth about it. If they were wrong or have been completely surpassed, then they themselves would say that they are of no interest. To put them in the humanities is the equivalent of naming a

street after them or setting up a statue in a corner of a park. They are effectively dead. Plato, Bacon, Machiavelli and Montesquieu are in the same condition, except for that little enclave in political science. The humanities are the repository for *all* of the classics now—but much of the classic literature claimed to be about the order of the whole of nature and man's place in it, to legislate for that whole and to tell the truth about it. If such claims are denied, these writers and their books cannot be read seriously, and their neglect elsewhere is justified. They have been saved only on the condition of being mummified. The humanities' willingness to receive them has taken them off the backs of the natural and social sciences, where they constituted a challenge that no longer has to be met. On the portal of the humanities is written in many ways and many tongues, "There is no truth—at least here."

The humanities are the specialty that now exclusively possesses the books that are not specialized, that insist upon asking the questions about the whole that are excluded from the rest of the university, which is dominated by real specialties, as resistant to self-examination as they were in Socrates' day and now rid of the gadfly. The humanities have not had the vigor to fight it out with triumphant natural science, and want to act as though it were just a specialty. But, as I have said over and over again, however much the humane disciplines would like to forget about their essential conflict with natural science as now practiced and understood, they are gradually undermined by it. Whether it is old philosophic texts that raise now inadmissible questions, or old works of literature that presuppose the being of the noble and the beautiful, materialism, determinism, reductionism, homogenization—however one describes modern natural science—deny their importance and their very possibility. Natural science asserts that it is metaphysically neutral, and hence has no need for philosophy, and that imagination is not a faculty that in any way intuits the real—hence art has nothing to do with truth. The kinds of questions children ask: Is there a God? Is there freedom? Is there punishment for evil deeds? Is there certain knowledge? What is a good society? were once also the questions addressed by science and philosophy. But now the grownups are too busy at work, and the children are left in a day-care center called the humanities, in which the discussions have no echo in the adult world. Moreover, students whose nature draws them to such questions and to the books that appear to investigate them are very quickly

rebuffed by the fact that their humanities teachers do not want or are unable to use the books to respond to their needs.

This problem of the old books is not new. In Swift's *Battle of the Books* one finds Bentley, the premier Greek scholar of the eighteenth century, on the side of the moderns. He accepted the superiority of modern thought to Greek thought. So why study Greek books? This question remains unanswered in classics departments. There are all sorts of dodges, ranging from pure philological analysis to using these books to show the relation between thought and economic conditions. But practically no one even tries to read them as they were once read—for the sake of finding out whether they are true. Aristotle's *Ethics* teaches us not what a good man is but what the Greeks thought about morality. But who really cares very much about that? Not any normal person who wants to lead a serious life.

All the things I have said about books in our time help to characterize the situation of the humanities, which are the really exposed part of the university. They have been buffeted more severely by historicism and relativism than the other parts. They suffer most from democratic society's lack of respect for tradition and its emphasis on utility. To the extent that the humanities are supposed to treat of creativity, professors' lack of creativity becomes a handicap. The humanities are embarrassed by the political content of many of the literary works belonging to them. They have had to alter their contents for the sake of openness to other cultures. And when the old university habits were changed, they found themselves least able to answer the question "Why?," least able to force students to meet standards, or to attract them with any clear account of what they would learn. One need only glance at the situation of the natural sciences in all these respects to see the gravity of the problem faced by the humanities. Natural science is sovereignly indifferent to the fact that there were and are other kinds of explanations of natural phenomena in other ages or cultures. The relation between Einstein and Buddha is purely for educational TV, in programs put together by humanists. Whatever its practitioners may say, they are sure its explanations are true, or truth. They do not have to give reasons "why," because the answer seems all too evident.

The natural sciences are able to assert that they are pursuing the important truth, and the humanities are not able to make any such

assertion. That is always the critical point. Without this, no study can remain alive. Vague insistence that without the humanities we will no longer be civilized rings very hollow when no one can say what "civilized" means, when there are said to be many civilizations that are all equal. The claim of "the classic" loses all legitimacy when the classic cannot be believed to tell the truth. The truth question is most pressing and acutely embarrassing for those who deal with the philosophic texts, but also creates problems for those treating purely literary works. There is an enormous difference between saying, as teachers once did, "You must learn to see the world as Homer or Shakespeare did," and saying, as teachers now do, "Homer and Shakespeare had some of the same concerns you do and can enrich your vision of the world." In the former approach students are challenged to discover new experiences and reassess old; in the latter, they are free to use the books in any way they please.

I am distinguishing two related but different problems here. The contents of the classic books have become particularly difficult to defend in modern times, and the professors who now teach them do not care to defend them, are not interested in their truth. One can most clearly see the latter in the case of the Bible. To include it in the humanities is already a blasphemy, a denial of its own claims. There it is almost inevitably treated in one of two ways: It is subjected to modern "scientific" analysis, called the Higher Criticism, where it is dismantled, to show how "sacred" books are put together, and that they are not what they claim to be. It is useful as a mosaic in which one finds the footprints of many dead civilizations. Or else the Bible is used in courses in comparative religion as one expression of the need for the "sacred" and as a contribution to the very modern, very scientific study of the structure of "myths." (Here one can join up with the anthropologists and really be alive.) A teacher who treated the Bible naively, taking it at its word, or Word, would be accused of scientific incompetence and lack of sophistication. Moreover, he might rock the boat and start the religious wars all over again, as well as a quarrel within the university between reason and revelation, which would upset comfortable arrangements and wind up by being humiliating to the humanities. Here one sees the traces of the Enlightenment's political project, which wanted precisely to render the Bible, and other old books, undangerous. This project is one of the underlying causes of the impotence of the humanities. The best that can be done, it appears, is to teach "The Bible as Literature," as opposed to "as Revelation," which it claims to be. In this way it can be read somewhat independently of deforming scholarly apparatus, as we read, for example, *Pride and Prejudice.* Thus the few professors who feel that there is something wrong with the other approaches tend to their consciences.

Professors of the humanities have long been desperate to make their subjects accord with modernity instead of a challenge to it. One sees this in a puerile form in the footnotes to Paul Shorey's edition of Plato's *Republic,* on which I cut my teeth, where he is eager to show that Plato had already divined this or that discovery made by some American professor of psychology in 1911, while he remains studiously silent about Plato's embarrassing disagreements with current views. Much study in the humanities is just a more or less sophisticated version of the same thing. I do not deny that at least some professors love the works they study and teach. But there is a furious effort to make them up-to-date, largely by treating them as the matter formed by some contemporary theory—cultural, historical, economic or psychological. The effort to read books as their writers intended them to be read has been made into a crime, ever since "the intentional fallacy" was instituted. There are endless debates about methods—among Freudian criticism, Marxist criticism, New Criticism, Structuralism and Deconstructionism, and many others, all of which have in common the premise that what Plato or Dante had to say about reality is unimportant. These schools of criticism make the writers plants in a garden planned by a modern scholar, while their own garden-planning vocation is denied them. The writers ought to plant, or even bury, the scholar. Nietzsche said that after the ministrations of modern scholarship the *Symposium* is so far away that it can no longer seduce us; its immediate charm has utterly vanished. When it comes down to it, the humanities scholar is not motivated by inner necessity, by any urgency, certainly not one dictated by old books. The scholar who chooses to study Sophocles could just as well have chosen Euripides. And why a poet, and not a philosopher or a historian; or why, after all, a Greek, and not a Turk?

There are a few humanities departments in universities that have been able to escape respectably into the sciences, such as archeology and some aspects of the languages and linguistics. They have almost entirely broken off relations with the contents of books. Fine art and music are, of course, in large measure independent of the meanings of books, al-

though the way of treating them does, at least to some extent, depend on the prevailing views about what art is and what is important in it. There is in humanities a great deal of purely scholarly work that is neutral, useful and intended to be used by those who have something to say, such as the making of dictionaries and the establishment of texts.

The list of departments is dominated by the long catalogue of the various departments of language and literature, usually one for each of the Western languages, and conglomerates for the others. Except for English, they all are responsible for teaching foreign languages. The teachers have had to learn a difficult language well and must teach it to a population of students who do not really want to learn languages very much. Now, in addition to the language, there are books written in that language, and the learning of the language entails reading those books. Hence, having learned the language in effect qualifies the teacher to teach the contents of the books, particularly since the books do not now belong anywhere else. However, the teachers' real knowledge of and affinity with those books is not ensured by their mastery of the language. The books are the important thing, but the language tail tends to wag the literature dog. These departments are the primary guardians of the classic literature and protect their dominion over their works ferociously. University convention submerges nature. It issues licenses, and hunting without one is forbidden. Moreover, because of these conventions the professors also listen to one another more attentively than to outsiders, and are listened to more attentively than others by outsiders, as doctors are more impressive to laymen in matters of health than are other laymen. A cozy self-satisfaction of specialists easily results (until there are rude jolts from the outside, such as occurred during the sixties). Professors of Greek forget or are unaware that Thomas Aquinas, who did not know Greek, was a better interpreter of Aristotle than any of them have proved to be, not only because he was smarter but because he took Aristotle more seriously.

This arrangement of the language and literature departments entails other structural difficulties. Do Greek poetry, history and philosophy belong together, or again, is not the secondary fact of the Greek language determining the articulation of the substance? And is it not possible that the proper connections go beyond Greece altogether, constituting such pairs as Plato and Farabi or Aristotle and Hobbes? Willy-nilly these departments are forced to adopt historical premises. Greek philosophers

are of a piece and, more likely, the whole of Greek culture or civilization is a tightly woven tapestry of which the Greek scholar, not the philosopher or the poet, is the master. From the outset this arrangement answers the crucial questions about the relation between the mind and history before they are raised, and does so in a way contrary to the way Plato or Aristotle would answer them.

Most interesting of all, lost amidst this collection of disciplines, modestly sits philosophy. It has been dethroned by political and theoretical democracy, bereft of the passion or the capacity to rule. Its story defines in itself our whole problem. Philosophy once proudly proclaimed that it was the best way of life, and it dared to survey the whole, to seek the first causes of all things, and not only dictated its rules to the special sciences but constituted and ordered them. The classic philosophic books are philosophy in action, doing precisely these things. But this was all impossible, *hybris,* say their impoverished heirs. Real science did not need them, and the rest is ideology or myth. Now they are just books on a shelf. Democracy took away philosophy's privileges, and philosophy could not decide whether to fade away or to take a job. Philosophy was architectonic, had the plans for the whole building, and the carpenters, masons and plumbers were its subordinates and had no meaning without its plan. Philosophy founded the university, but it could no longer do so. We live off its legacy. When people speak vaguely about generalists vs. specialists, they must mean by the generalist the philosopher, for he is the only kind of knower who embraces, or once embraced, all the specialties, possessing a subject matter, necessary to the specialties, which was real—being or the good—and not just a collection of the matters of the specialties. Philosophy is no longer a way of life, and it is no longer a sovereign science. Its situation in our universities has something to do with the desperate condition of philosophy in the world today, and something to do with its peculiar history as a discipline in America. With respect to the former, although reason is gravely threatened, Nietzsche and Heidegger were genuine philosophers and able to face up to and face down both natural science and historicism, the two great contemporary opponents of philosophy. Philosophy is still possible. And on the Continent even now, schoolchildren are taught philosophy, and it seems to be something real. An American high school student knows only the word "philosophy," and it does not appear to be any more serious a life choice than yoga. In America,

anyhow, everybody has a philosophy. Philosophy was not ever a very powerful presence in universities, although there were important exceptions. We began with a public philosophy that sufficed for us, and we thought that it was common sense. In America, Tocqueville said, everyone is a Cartesian although no one has read Descartes. We were almost entirely importers of philosophy, with the exception of Pragmatism. One need not have read a line of philosophy to be considered educated in this country. It is easily equated with hot air, much more so than any of the other humane disciplines. So it always had an uphill fight. Students who did seek it could, however, find some refreshment at its source.

But it has succumbed and probably could disappear without being much noticed. It has a scientific component, logic, which is attached to the sciences and could easily be detached from philosophy. This is serious, practiced by competent specialists, and responds to none of the permanent philosophic questions. History of philosophy, the compendium of dead philosophies that was always most lively for the students, has been neglected, and students find it better treated in a variety of other disciplines. Positivism and ordinary language analysis have long dominated, although they are on the decline and evidently being replaced by nothing. These are simply methods of a sort, and they repel students who come with the humanizing questions. Professors of these schools simply would not and could not talk about anything important, and they themselves do not represent a philosophic life for the students. In some places existentialism and phenomenology have gained a foothold, and they are much more attractive to students than positivism or ordinary language analysis. Catholic universities have always kept some contact with medieval philosophy, and hence, Aristotle. But, in sum, the philosophy landscape is largely bleak. That is why so much of the philosophic instinct in America used to lead toward the new social sciences and is now veering off toward certain branches of literature and literary criticism. As it stands, philosophy is just another humanities subject, rather contentless, without a thought of trying to take command in the crisis of the university. Actually it contains less of the exhilarating presence of the tradition in philosophy than do the other humanities disciplines, and one finds its professors least active of the humanists in attempts to revitalize liberal education. Although there was a certain modesty about ordinary language analysis—"We just help to give you clarity about what you are already doing"—

there was also smugness: "We know what was wrong with the whole tradition, and we don't need it anymore." Therefore the tradition disappeared from philosophy's confines.

All the language catalogued in Part Two was produced by philosophy and was in Europe known to have been produced by philosophy, so that it paved a road to philosophy. In America its antecedents remain unknown. We took over the results without having had any of the intellectual experiences leading to them. But the ignorance of the origins and the fact that American philosophy departments do not lay claim to them—are in fact just as ignorant of them as is the general public—means that the philosophic content of our language and lives does not direct us to philosophy. This is a real difference between the Continent and us. Here the philosophic language is nothing but jargon.

The evident weakness of the division of literature on the basis of the language in which it was written led, a half-century ago, to the sensible project of trying to reunite it. Thus comparative literature was founded. But as is the case with all such undertakings in our times, there was considerable perplexity about what the new discipline was trying to do, and it tended to generate systems of comparison that dominated the literary works, tributes to the ingenuity of their founders rather than openings through which the works could reveal themselves freed from arbitrary constraints. Comparative literature has now fallen largely into the hands of a group of professors who are influenced by the post-Sartrean generation of Parisian Heideggerians, in particular Derrida, Foucault and Barthes. The school is called Deconstructionism, and it is the last, predictable, stage in the suppression of reason and the denial of the possibility of truth in the name of philosophy. The interpreter's creative activity is more important than the text; there is no text, only interpretation. Thus the one thing most necessary for us, the knowledge of what these texts have to tell us, is turned over to the subjective, creative selves of these interpreters, who say that there is both no text and no reality to which the texts refer. A cheapened interpretation of Nietzsche liberates us from the objective imperatives of the texts that might have liberated us from our increasingly low and narrow horizon. Everything has tended to soften the demands made on us by the tradition; this simply dissolves it.

This fad will pass, as it has already in Paris. But it appeals to our worst instincts and shows where our temptations lie. It is the literary comple-

ment to the "life-styles" science I discussed in Part Two. Fancy German philosophic talk fascinates us and takes the place of the really serious things. This will not be the last attempt of its kind coming from the dispossessed humanities in their search for an imaginary empire, one that flatters popular democratic tastes.

Conclusion

These are the shadows cast by the peaks of the university over the entering undergraduate. Together they represent what the university has to say about man and his education, and they do not project a coherent image. The differences and the indifferences are too great. It is difficult to imagine that there is either the wherewithal or the energy within the university to constitute or reconstitute the idea of an educated human being and establish a liberal education again.

However, the contemplation of this scene is in itself a proper philosophic activity. The university's evident lack of wholeness in an enterprise that clearly demands it cannot help troubling some of its members. The questions are all there. They only need to be addressed continuously and seriously for liberal learning to exist; for it does not consist so much in answers as in the permanent dialogue. It is in such perplexed professors that at least the idea might persevere and help to guide some of the needy young persons at our doorstep. The matter is still present in the university; it is the form that has vanished. One cannot and should not hope for a general reform. The hope is that the embers do not die out.

Men may live more truly and fully in reading Plato and Shakespeare than at any other time, because then they are participating in essential being and are forgetting their accidental lives. The fact that this kind of humanity exists or existed, and that we can somehow still touch it with the tips of our outstretched fingers, makes our imperfect humanity, which we can no longer bear, tolerable. The books in their objective beauty are still there, and we must help protect and cultivate the delicate tendrils reaching out toward them through the unfriendly soil of students' souls. Human nature, it seems, remains the same in our very altered circumstances because we still face the same problems, if in different guises, and have the distinctively human need to solve them, even though our awareness and forces have become enfeebled.

After a reading of the *Symposium* a serious student came with deep melancholy and said it was impossible to imagine that magic Athenian atmosphere reproduced, in which friendly men, educated, lively, on a footing of equality, civilized but natural, came together and told wonderful stories about the meaning of their longing. But such experiences are always accessible. Actually, this playful discussion took place in the midst of a terrible war that Athens was destined to lose, and Aristophanes and Socrates at least could foresee that this meant the decline of Greek civilization. But they were not given to culture despair, and in these terrible political circumstances, their abandon to the joy of nature proved the viability of what is best in man, independent of accidents, of circumstance. We feel ourselves too dependent on history and culture. This student did not have Socrates, but he had Plato's book about him, which might even be better; he had brains, friends and a country happily free enough to let them gather and speak as they will. What is essential about that dialogue, or any of the Platonic dialogues, is reproducible in almost all times and places. He and his friends can think together. It requires much thought to learn that this thinking might be what it is all for. That's where we are beginning to fail. But it is right under our noses, improbable but always present.

Throughout this book I have referred to Plato's *Republic,* which is for me *the* book on education, because it really explains to me what I experience as a man and a teacher, and I have almost always used it to point out what we should not hope for, as a teaching of moderation and resignation. But all its impossibilities act as a filter to leave the residue of the highest and non-illusory possibility. The real community of man, in the midst of all the self-contradictory simulacra of community, is the community of those who seek the truth, of the potential knowers, that is, in principle, of all men to the extent they desire to know. But in fact this includes only a few, the true friends, as Plato was to Aristotle at the very moment they were disagreeing about the nature of the good. Their common concern for the good linked them; their disagreement about it proved they needed one another to understand it. They were absolutely one soul as they looked at the problem. This, according to Plato, is the only real friendship, the only real common good. It is here that the contact people so desperately seek is to be found. The other kinds of relatedness are only imperfect reflections of this one trying to be self-subsisting, gaining their only justification from their ultimate relation to this one.

This is the meaning of the riddle of the improbable philosopher-kings. They have a true community that is exemplary for all other communities.

This is a radical teaching but perhaps one appropriate to our own radical time, in which proximate attachments have become so questionable and we know of no others. This age is not utterly insalubrious for philosophy. Our problems are so great and their sources so deep that to understand them we need philosophy more than ever, if we do not despair of it, and it faces the challenges on which it flourishes. I still believe that universities, rightly understood, are where community and friendship can exist in our times. Our thought and our politics have become inextricably bound up with the universities, and they have served us well, human things being what they are. But for all that, and even though they deserve our strenuous efforts, one should never forget that Socrates was not a professor, that he was put to death, and that the love of wisdom survived, partly because of his *individual* example. This is what really counts, and we must remember it in order to know how to defend the university.

This is the American moment in world history, the one for which we shall forever be judged. Just as in politics the responsibility for the fate of freedom in the world has devolved upon our regime, so the fate of philosophy in the world has devolved upon our universities, and the two are related as they have never been before. The gravity of our given task is great, and it is very much in doubt how the future will judge our stewardship.

Afterword

Andrew Ferguson

He had gone public with his ideas. He had written a book—difficult but popular—a spirited, intelligent, warlike book, and it had sold and was still selling in both hemispheres and on both sides of the equator. The thing had been done quickly but in real earnest: no cheap concessions, no popularizing, no mental monkey business, no apologetics, no patrician airs. . . . His intellect had made a millionaire of him. It's no small matter to become rich and famous by saying exactly what you think—to say it in your own words, without compromise.

—*Ravelstein*, by Saul Bellow, 1996

Bellow's Ravelstein is a thinly fictionalized Allan Bloom, caught at the peak of life and rendered, so I'm told by Bloom's friends and students, with uncanny precision and ingenuity. We first see him dressed in a blue-and-white kimono, sashaying around the penthouse he's rented at the Hotel Crillon in the heart of Paris. His lover, a young man from Singapore named Nikki, lies asleep in bed. Bellow wants to impress upon the reader his subject's physicality. Abe Ravelstein's frame is long and angled and ungainly, but it's usually adorned in $5,000 suits. When he eats, you sense the pleasure with which he undertakes the task: "he was stoking his system," Bellow says, "and nourishing his ideas"; at dinner parties, hostesses are advised to place newspapers under his chair to gather the debris from his enthusiastic feeding. His baldness is "geological." He smokes constantly, twin spouts of tobacco smoke flowing dragonlike from

To My Students

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