

16. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind.*, pp 241-336.

that it can explain us and make a future possible. This is our educational crisis and opportunity. Western rationalism has culminated in a rejection of reason. Is this result necessary?

Many will say that my reports of the decisive influence of Continental, particularly German, philosophy on us are false or exaggerated and that, even if it were true that all this language comes from the source to which I attribute it, language does not have such effects. But the language is all around us. Its sources are also undeniable, as is the thought that produced the language. We know how the language was popularized. I need only think of my Amherst student or my Atlanta taxi driver to be persuaded that the categories of the mind determine the perceptions. If we can believe that Calvinist "worldviews" made capitalism, we can also credit the possibility that the overpowering visions of German philosophers are preparing the tyranny of the future.

I must reiterate that Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche are thinkers of the very highest order. This is, in fact, precisely my point. We must relearn what this means and also that there are others who belong in the same rank.

PART THREE

THE UNIVERSITY

FROM SOCRATES' *APOLOGY* TO HEIDEGGER'S *REKTORATSREDE*

When I was fifteen years old I saw the University of Chicago for the first time and somehow sensed that I had discovered my life. I had never before seen, or at least had not noticed, buildings that were evidently dedicated to a higher purpose, not to necessity or utility, not merely to shelter or manufacture or trade, but to something that might be an end in itself. The Middle West was not known for the splendor of its houses of worship or its monuments to political glory. There was little visible reminiscence of the spiritual heights with which to solicit the imagination or the admiration of young people. The longing for I knew not what suddenly found a response in the world outside.

It was, surely, the fake Gothic buildings. In the course of my education I have learned that they were fake, and that Gothic is not really my taste. But they pointed toward a road of learning that leads to the meeting place of the greats. There one finds examples of a sort not likely to be seen around one, without which one could neither recognize one's own capacities nor know how wonderful it is to belong to the species. This imitation of styles of faraway lands and ages showed an awareness of lack of, and a respect for, the substance expressed by those styles. These buildings were a bow to the contemplative life by a nation addicted more than any other to the active life. The pseudo-Gothic was much ridiculed, and nobody builds like that anymore. It is not authentic, not an expression of what we are, so it was said. To me it was and remains an expression of what we are. One wonders whether the culture critics had as good an instinct

about our spiritual needs as the vulgar rich who paid for the buildings. This nation's impulse is toward the future, and tradition seems more of a shackle to it than an inspiration. Reminiscences and warnings from the past are our only monitor as we careen along our path. Those despised millionaires who set up a university in the midst of a city that seems devoted only to the American goals paid tribute to what they had neglected, whether it was out of a sense of what they themselves had missed, or out of bad conscience about what their lives were exclusively devoted to, or to satisfy the vanity of having their names attached to the enterprise. (What feeds a man's vanity teaches as much about him as anything.) Education was an American thing, and not only technical education.

For me the promise of these buildings was fully kept. From the moment I became a student there, it seemed plausible to spend all my time thinking about what I am, a theme that was interesting to me but had never appeared a proper or possible subject of study. In high school I had seen many of the older boys and girls go off to the state university to become doctors, lawyers, social workers, teachers, the whole variety of professions respectable in the little world in which I lived. The university was part of growing up, but it was not looked forward to as a transforming experience—nor was it so in fact. No one believed that there were serious ends of which we had not heard, or that there was a way of studying our ends and determining their rank order. In short, philosophy was only a word, and literature a form of entertainment. Our high schools and the atmosphere around them put us in this frame of mind. But a great university presented another kind of atmosphere, announcing that there are questions that ought to be addressed by everyone but are not asked in ordinary life or expected to be answered there. It provided an atmosphere of free inquiry, and therefore excluded what is not conducive to or is inimical to such inquiry. It made a distinction between what is important and not important. It protected the tradition, not because tradition is tradition but because tradition provides models of discussion on a uniquely high level. It contained marvels and made possible friendships consisting in shared experiences of those marvels. Most of all there was the presence of some authentically great thinkers who gave living proof of the existence of the theoretical life and whose motives could not easily be reduced to any of the baser ones people delight in thinking universal. They had authority, not based on power, money or family, but

on natural gifts that properly compel respect. The relations among them and between them and students were the revelation of a community in which there is a true common good. In a nation founded on reason, the university was the temple of the regime, dedicated to the purest use of reason and evoking the kind of reverence appropriate to an association of free and equal human beings.

The years have taught me that much of this existed only in my youthful and enthusiastic imagination, but not so much as one might suppose. The institutions were much more ambiguous than I could have suspected, and they have proved much frailer when caught in contrary winds than it seemed they would be. But I did see real thinkers who opened up new worlds for me. The substance of my being has been informed by the books I learned to care for. They accompany me every minute of every day of my life, making me see much more and be much more than I could have seen or been if fortune had not put me into a great university at one of its greatest moments. I have had teachers and students such as dreams are made on. And most of all I have friends with whom I can share thinking about what friendship is, with whom there is a touching of souls and in whom works that common good of which I have just spoken. All of this is, of course, mixed with the weaknesses and uglinesses that life necessarily contains. None of it cancels the low in man. But it informs even that low. None of my disappointments with the university—which is after all only a vehicle for contents in principle separable from it—has ever made me doubt that the life it gave me was anything other than the best one available to me. Never did I think that the university was properly ministerial to the society around it. Rather I thought and think that society is ministerial to the university, and I bless a society that tolerates and supports an eternal childhood for some, a childhood whose playfulness can in turn be a blessing to society. Falling in love with the idea of the university is not a folly, for only by means of it is one able to see what can be. Without it, all these wonderful results of the theoretical life collapse back into the primal slime from which they cannot re-emerge. The facile economic and psychological debunking of the theoretical life cannot do away with its irreducible beauties. But such debunking can obscure them, and has.

Tocqueville on Democratic Intellectual Life

Tocqueville taught me the importance of the university to democratic society. His noble book, *Democracy in America*, gave voice to my inchoate sentiments. His portrait of the "Intellectual Life of the Americans" is the mirror in which we can see ourselves. But, because the broader perspective he brings is alien, we do not immediately recognize ourselves. In my experience, students at first are bored by Tocqueville's account of the American mind, but, if they are really made to pay attention, they are finally riveted and alarmed by it. No one likes to believe that what he can see is limited by circumstances, no matter how easily he recognizes this fact in others. Tocqueville shows how a democratic regime causes a particular intellectual bent which, if not actively corrected, distorts the mind's vision.

The great democratic danger, according to Tocqueville, is enslavement to public opinion. The claim of democracy is that every man decides for himself. The use of one's natural faculties to determine for oneself what is true and false and good and bad is the American philosophic method. Democracy liberates from tradition, which in other kinds of regimes determines the judgment. Prejudices of religion, class and family are leveled, not only in principle but also in fact, because none of their representatives has an intellectual authority. Equal political right makes it impossible for church or aristocracy to establish the bastions from which they can affect men's opinions. Churchmen, for whom divine revelation is the standard, aristocrats in whom the reverences for antiquity are powerful, fathers who always tend to prefer the rights of the ancestral to those of reason, are all displaced in favor of the equal individual. Even if men seek authority, they cannot find it where they used to find it in other regimes. Thus the external impediments to the free exercise of reason have been removed in democracy. Men are actually on their own in comparison to what they were in other regimes and with respect to the usual sources of opinion. This promotes a measure of reason. However, since very few people school themselves in the use of reason beyond the calculation of self-interest encouraged by the regime, they need help on

a vast number of issues—in fact, all issues, inasmuch as everything is opened up to fresh and independent judgment—for the consideration of which they have neither time nor capacity. Even the self-interest about which they calculate—the ends—may become doubtful. Some kind of authority is often necessary for most men and is necessary, at least sometimes, for all men. In the absence of anything else to which to turn, the common beliefs of most men are almost always what will determine judgment. This is just where tradition used to be most valuable. Without being seduced by its undemocratic and antirational mystique, tradition does provide a counterpoise to and a repair from the merely current, and contains the petrified remains of old wisdom (along with much that is not wisdom). The active presence of a tradition in a man's soul gives him a resource against the ephemeral, the kind of resource that only the wise can find simply within themselves. The paradoxical result of the liberation of reason is greater reliance on public opinion for guidance, a weakening of independence.

Altogether, reason is exposed at the center of the stage. Although every man in democracy thinks himself individually the equal of every other man, this makes it difficult to resist the collectivity of equal men. If all opinions are equal, then the majority of opinions, on the psychological analogy of politics, should hold sway. It is very well to say that each should follow his own opinion, but since consensus is required for social and political life, accommodation is necessary. So, unless there is some strong ground for opposition to majority opinion, it inevitably prevails. This is the really dangerous form of the tyranny of the majority, not the kind that actively persecutes minorities but the kind that breaks the inner will to resist because there is no qualified source of nonconforming principles and no sense of superior right. The majority is all there is. What the majority decides is the only tribunal. It is not so much its power that intimidates but its semblance of justice. Tocqueville found that Americans talked very much about individual right but that there was a real monotony of thought and that vigorous independence of mind was rare. Even those who appear to be free-thinkers really look to a constituency and expect one day to be part of a majority. They are creatures of public opinion as much as are conformists—actors of nonconformism in the theater of the conformists who admire and applaud nonconformity of certain kinds, the kinds that radicalize the already dominant opinions.

Reason's exposedness in the rational regime is exacerbated by the absence of class in the old sense, based on principles or convictions of right. There is a general agreement about the most fundamental political principles, and therefore doubts about them have no status. In aristocracies there was also the party of the people, but in democracy there is no aristocratic party. This means that there is no protection for the opponents of the governing principles as well as no respectability for them. There were in the past also parties representing ecclesiastical interests against those of monarchs or aristocrats. These too provided a place for dissenting opinions to flourish. In the heat of our political squabbles we tend to lose sight of the fact that our differences of principle are very small, compared to those over which men used to fight. The only quarrel in our history that really involved fundamental differences about fundamental principles was over slavery. But even the proponents of slavery hardly dared assert that some human beings are made by nature to serve other human beings, as did Aristotle; they had to deny the humanity of the blacks. Besides, that question was really already settled with the Declaration of Independence. Black slavery was an aberration that had to be extinguished, not a permanent feature of our national life. Not only slavery, but aristocracy, monarchy and theocracy were laid to rest by the Declaration and the Constitution. This was very good for our domestic tranquility, but not very encouraging for theoretical doubts about triumphant equality. Not only were the old questions of political theorizing held to have been definitively answered, but the resources that nourished diversity concerning them were removed. Democratic conscience and the simple need to survive combine to suppress doubt. The kinds of questions that Tocqueville put to America—the answers to which allowed him to affirm the justice of equality more reasonably and more positively than most of us can do—came out of an experience that we cannot have: his direct experience of an alternative regime and temper of soul—aristocracy. If we cannot in any way have access to something like that experience, our understanding of the range of human possibilities is impoverished, and our capacity to assess our strengths and weaknesses is diminished.

To make that range of possibilities accessible, to overcome the regime's tendency to discourage appreciation of important alternatives, the university must come to the aid of unprotected and timid reason. The

university is the place where inquiry and philosophic openness come into their own. It is intended to encourage the noninstrumental use of reason for its own sake, to provide the atmosphere where the moral and physical superiority of the dominant will not intimidate philosophic doubt. And it preserves the treasury of great deeds, great men and great thoughts required to nourish that doubt.

Freedom of the mind requires not only, or not even especially, the absence of legal constraints but the presence of alternative thoughts. The most successful tyranny is not the one that uses force to assure uniformity but the one that removes the awareness of other possibilities, that makes it seem inconceivable that other ways are viable, that removes the sense that there is an outside. It is not feelings or commitments that will render a man free, but thoughts, reasoned thoughts. Feelings are largely formed and informed by convention. Real differences come from difference in thought and fundamental principle. Much in democracy conduces to the assault on awareness of difference.

In the first place, as with all regimes, there is what might be called an official interpretation of the past that makes it appear defective or just a step on the way to the present regime. An example of this is the interpretation of Rome and the Roman empire in Augustine's *City of God*. Rome is not forgotten, but it is remembered only through the lens of victorious Christianity and therefore poses no challenge to it.

Second, sycophancy toward those who hold power is a fact in every regime, and especially in a democracy, where, unlike tyranny, there is an accepted principle of legitimacy that breaks the inner will to resist, and where, as I have said, there is no legitimate power other than the people to which a man can turn. Repugnance at the power of the people, at the fact that the popular taste should rule in all arenas of life, is very rare in a modern democracy. One of the intellectual charms of Marxism is that it explains the injustice or philistinism of the people in such a way as to exculpate the people, who are said to be manipulated by corrupt elites. Thus a Marxist is able to criticize the present without isolating himself from present and future. Almost no one wants to face the possibility that "bourgeois vulgarity" might really be the nature of the people, always and everywhere. Flattery of the people and incapacity to resist public opinion are the democratic vices, particularly among writers, artists, journalists and anyone else who is dependent on an audience. Hostility and excessive

contempt for the people is the vice of aristocracies, and is hardly our problem. Aristocracies hate and fear demagogues most of all, while democracies in their pure form hate and fear "elitists" most of all, because they are unjust, i.e., they do not accept the leading principle of justice in those regimes. Hence each regime discounts those who are most likely to recognize and compensate for its political and intellectual propensities, while it admires those who encourage them. But, to repeat, this tendency is more acute in democracy because of the absence of a nondemocratic class. In every regime there is a people; there is not necessarily any other class.

Third, the democratic concentration on the useful, on the solution of what are believed by the populace at large to be the most pressing problems, makes theoretical distance seem not only useless but immoral. When there is poverty, disease and war, who can claim the right to idle in Epicurean gardens, asking questions that have already been answered and keeping a distance where commitment is demanded? The for-its-own-sake is alien to the modern democratic spirit, particularly in matters intellectual. Whenever there is a crunch, democratic men devoted to thought have a crisis of conscience, have to find a way to interpret their endeavors by the standard of utility, or otherwise tend to abandon or deform them. This tendency is enhanced by the fact that in egalitarian society practically nobody has a really grand opinion of himself, or has been nurtured in a sense of special right and a proud contempt for the merely necessary. Aristotle's great-souled man, who loves beautiful and useless things, is not a democratic type. Such a man loves honor but despises it because he knows he deserves better, whereas democratic vanity defines itself by the honors it seeks and can get. The lover of beautiful and useless things is far from being a philosopher—at least as far as is the lover of the useful, who is likely to be more reasonable—but he has the advantage of despising many of the same things the philosopher does and is likely to admire the philosopher for his very uselessness, as an adornment. Great and unusual undertakings are more natural to him than to the lover of the useful, and he believes in and reveres motives that are denied existence by utilitarian psychology. He can take for granted the things that are the ends of most men's strivings—money and status. He is free, and must look for other fulfillments, unless he spends, as in the democratic view he should do, his life helping others to get what he

already has. Knowing as fulfillment in itself rather than as task required for other fulfillments is immediately intelligible to him. Finality as opposed to instrumentality, and happiness as opposed to the pursuit of happiness, appeal to the aristocratic temperament. All of this is salutary for the intellectual life, and none of it is endemic to democracy.

Thus the mere announcement of the rule of reason does not create the conditions for the full exercise of rationality, and in removing the impediments to it some of its supports are also dismantled. Reason is only one part of the soul's economy and requires a balance of the other parts in order to function properly. The issue is whether the passions are its servitors, or whether it is the handmaiden of the passions. The latter interpretation, which is Hobbes's, plays an important role in the development of modern democracy and is a depreciation as well as an appreciation of reason. Older, more traditional orders that do not encourage the free play of reason contain elements reminiscent of the nobler, philosophic interpretation of reason and help to prevent its degradation. Those elements are connected with the piety that prevails in such orders. They convey a certain reverence for the higher, a respect for the contemplative life, understood as contemplation of God and the peak of devotion, and a cleaving to eternal beings that mitigates absorption in the merely pressing or current. These are images of philosophic magnificence—which, it must be stressed, are distortions of the original, and can be its bitterest enemies, but which preserve the order of the cosmos and of the soul from which philosophy begins. Tocqueville describes this marvelously well in his moving account of Pascal, whom he evidently regards as the most perfect of men. The possibility of such a human type, the theoretical type, is, according to Tocqueville, most threatened in democracy, and it must be vigorously defended if humanity is not to be grievously impoverished. Much of the theoretical reflection that flourishes in modern democracy could be interpreted as egalitarian resentment against the higher type represented by Pascal, denigrating it, deforming it and interpreting it out of existence. Marxism and Freudianism reduce his motives to those all men have. Historicism denies him access to eternity. Value theory makes his reasoning irrelevant. If he were to appear, our eyes would be blind to his superiority, and we would be spared the discomfort it would cause us.

It is to prevent or cure this peculiar democratic blindness that the university may be said to exist in a democracy, not for the sake of establish-

ing an aristocracy but for the sake of democracy and for the sake of preserving the freedom of the mind—certainly one of the most important freedoms—for some individuals within it. The successful university is the proof that a society can be devoted to the well-being of all, without stunting human potential or imprisoning the mind to the goals of the regime. The deepest intellectual weakness of democracy is its lack of taste or gift for the theoretical life. All our Nobel prizes and the like do nothing to gainsay Tocqueville's appraisal in this regard. The issue is not whether we possess intelligence but whether we are adept at reflection of the broadest and deepest kind. We need constant reminders of our deficiency, now more than in the past. The great European universities used to act as our intellectual conscience, but with their decline, we are on our own. Nothing prevents us from thinking too well of ourselves. It is necessary that there be an unpopular institution in our midst that sets clarity above well-being or compassion, that resists our powerful urges and temptations, that is free of all snobbism but has standards. Those standards are in the first place accessible to us from the best of the past, although they must be such as to admit of the new, if it actually meets those standards. If nothing new does meet them, it is not a disaster. The ages of great spiritual fertility are rare and provide nourishment for other less fertile ones. What would be a disaster would be to lose the inspiration of those ages and have nothing to replace it with. This would make it even more unlikely that the rarest talents could find expression among us. The Bible and Homer exercised their influence for thousands of years, preserved in the mainstream or in backwaters, hardly ever being surpassed in power, without becoming irrelevant because they did not suit the temper of the times or the spirit of a regime. They provided the way out as well as the model for reform.

The university's task is thus well defined, if not easy to carry out or even keep in mind. It is, in the first place, always to maintain the permanent questions front and center. This it does primarily by preserving—by keeping alive—the works of those who best addressed these questions. In the Middle Ages, Aristotle was very much present in the minds of the leading elements of society. He was used as an authority almost on a level with the Church Fathers and was assimilated to them. This was, of course, an abuse of Aristotle, who thought that authority is the contrary of philosophy. His own teaching ought always to be approached with ques-

tions and doubts, not faith. The essence of philosophy is the abandonment of all authority in favor of individual human reason. Nevertheless, Aristotle was there, his moderate and sensible views had an effect on the world, and he could be a guide to those who came to have philosophic doubt. In our time, freedom from authority and the independence of reason are commonplaces. Aristotle, however, instead of being properly used—now that we have the proper disposition—has to all intents and purposes disappeared. We would hardly be able to use Aristotle, as did Hegel, to grasp the character of modernity. Instead we are more and more restricted to the narrow experience of the here and now, with a consequent loss of perspective. The disappearance of Aristotle has much less to do with his intrinsic qualities than with a political distaste for him, joined with the lack of intellectual discipline that results from a sense of self-sufficiency. Reason has become a prejudice for us. Rousseau noted that in his time many men were liberals who a century earlier would have been religious fanatics. He concluded that they were not really reasonable, but, rather, conformists. Reason transformed into prejudice is the worst form of prejudice, because reason is the only instrument for liberation from prejudice. The most important function of the university in an age of reason is to protect reason from itself, by being the model of true openness.

Hence, without having the answers, the university knows what openness is and knows the questions. It also knows the regime within which it lives, and the kinds of threats this regime poses to its activity. In a democracy it risks less by opposing the emergent, the changing and the ephemeral than by embracing them, because the society is already open to them, without monitoring what it accepts or sufficiently respecting the old. There the university risks less by having intransigently high standards than by trying to be too inclusive, because the society tends to blur standards in the name of equality. It also risks less by concentrating on the heroic than by looking to the commonplace, because the society levels. In an aristocracy the university would probably have to go in a direction opposite to the one taken in a democracy in order to liberate reason. But in an aristocracy the university is a less important institution than in a democratic society, because there are other centers for the life of the mind, whereas in a democracy there is practically no other center, practically no way of life, calling or profession, that requires or encourages or

even permits cultivation. This is increasingly the case in the late twentieth century. The university as an institution must compensate for what individuals lack in a democracy and must encourage its members to participate in its spirit. As the repository of the regime's own highest faculty and principle, it must have a strong sense of its importance outside the system of equal individuality. It must be contemptuous of public opinion because it has within it the source of autonomy—the quest for and even discovery of the truth according to nature. It must concentrate on philosophy, theology, the literary classics, and on those scientists like Newton, Descartes, and Leibniz who have the most comprehensive scientific vision and a sense of the relation of what they do to the order of the whole of things. These must help preserve what is most likely to be neglected in a democracy. They are not dogmatism but precisely the opposite: what is necessary to fight dogmatism. The university must resist the temptation to try to do everything for society. The university is only one interest among many and must always keep its eye on that interest for fear of compromising it in the desire to be more useful, more relevant, more popular.

The university's task is illustrated by two tendencies of the democratic mind to which Tocqueville points. One is abstractness. Because there is no tradition and men need guidance, general theories that are produced in a day and not properly grounded in experience, but seem to explain things and are useful crutches for finding one's way in a complicated world, have currency. Marxism, Freudianism, economism, behavioralism, etc., are examples of this tendency, and there are great rewards for those who purvey them. The very universality of democracy and the sameness of man presupposed by it encourage this tendency and make the mind's eye less sensitive to differences. All the terms discussed in Part Two are evidences of this abstractness, simulacra of thought and experience, hardly better than slogans, which take the place of reflection. In aristocracies men take the experiences of their nations as unique and superior and tend not to generalize, but rather to forget the natural community of men and the universality of thought. But they do really pay attention to their experiences, to the diversity of phenomena that is homogenized by abstract "mind-sets." This is another thing the democratic university must learn from aristocracies. Our temptation is to prefer the shiny new theory to the fully cognized experience. Even our famous empiricism is more of a theory than an openness to experience. Producing

theories is not theorizing, or a sign of the theoretical life. Concreteness, not abstractness, is the hallmark of philosophy. All interesting generalization must proceed from the richest awareness of what is to be explained, but the tendency to abstractness leads to simplifying the phenomena in order more easily to deal with them.

If, for example, one sees only gain as a motive in men's actions, then it is easy to explain them. One simply abstracts from what is really there. After a while one notices nothing other than the postulated motives. To the extent that men begin to believe in the theory, they no longer believe that there are other motives in themselves. And when social policy is based on such a theory, finally one succeeds in producing men who fit the theory. When this is occurring or has occurred, what is most needed is the capacity to recover the original nature of man and his motives, to see what does not fit the theory. Hobbes's mercenary account of the virtues, which won out in psychology, needs to be contrasted with Aristotle's account, which preserves the independent nobility of the virtues. Hobbes was thinking of Aristotle, which we never do, when he developed his teaching. In order to restore what was really a debate, and thereby restore the phenomenon *man*, one must read Aristotle and Hobbes together and look at what each saw in man. Then one has the material on which to reflect. For modern men who live in a world transformed by abstractions and who have themselves been transformed by abstractions, the only way to experience man again is by thinking these abstractions through with the help of thinkers who did not share them and who can lead us to experiences that are difficult or impossible to have without their help.

A related problem is a tendency in the social sciences to prefer deterministic explanations of events to those that see them as results of human deliberation and choice. Tocqueville explains this tendency as a consequence of the impotence of the individual in egalitarian society. Curiously, in democracy, the freest of societies, men turn out to be more willing to accept doctrines that tell them that they are determined, that is, not free. No one by himself seems to be able, or have the right, to control events, which appear to be moved by impersonal forces. In aristocracies, on the other hand, individuals born to high position have too great a sense of their control over what they appear to command, are sure of their freedom and despise everything that might seem to determine them. Neither the aristocratic nor democratic sentiment about the causes of

events is simply adequate. In a democracy where men already think they are weak, they are too open to theories that teach that they *are* weak, which, by making individuals think that controlling action is impossible, have the effect of weakening them further. The antidote is again the classic, the heroic—Homer, Plutarch. At the outset they appear hopelessly naive to us. But it is our sophisticated naiveté that makes us think that. Churchill was inspired by his ancestor Marlborough, and his confidence in his own action is inconceivable without the encouragement provided by that model. Marlborough said that Shakespeare was essential to his education. And Shakespeare learned a large part of what he knew about statesmanship from Plutarch. This is the intellectual genealogy of modern heroes. The democratic revolution of the mind extinguishes such old family lines and replaces them with decision-making theory, in which there is no category for statesmanship, let alone heroes.

To sum up, there is one simple rule for the university's activity: it need not concern itself with providing its students with experiences that are available in democratic society. They will have them in any event. It must provide them with experiences they cannot have there. Tocqueville did not believe that the old writers were perfect, but he believed that they could best make us aware of our imperfections, which is what counts for us.

The universities never performed this function very well. Now they have practically ceased trying.

The Relation Between Thought and Civil Society

Although universities go back very far, the university as we know it, in its content and its aim, is the product of the Enlightenment. To enlighten is to bring light where there had previously been darkness, to replace opinion, i.e., superstition, by scientific knowledge of nature, beginning from phenomena available to all men and ending in rational demonstration possible for all men. All things must be investigated and understood by reason, i.e., science or philosophy (the distinction between the two is of recent origin, coming to currency only in the nineteenth century). Knowledge of the nature of all things is Enlightenment's goal. The past was characterized not by ignorance but by false opinions. Men always had opinions about everything, but those opinions were without

ground and indemonstrable. Yet they governed the nations of men and were authoritative. Thus the problem of Enlightenment is not merely discovery of the truth but the conflict between the truth and the beliefs of men, which are incorporated into the law. Enlightenment begins from the tension between what men are compelled to believe by city and religion, on the one hand, and the quest for scientific truth on the other. To think and speak doubts about, let alone to propose substitutes for, the fundamental opinions was forbidden by every regime previously known to man. Doing so was thought to be, and in fact was, disloyal and impious.

Of course, the men of the Enlightenment were not the first to recognize this tension. It had existed and been known to exist since science emerged in Greece sometime between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C. Enlightenment thinkers were aware that there had been surpassingly great philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers and political scientists from that time on, who had suffered persecutions and been compelled to live on the fringes of society. The innovation of the Enlightenment was the attempt to reduce that tension and to alter the philosopher's relation to civil society. The learned society and the university, the publicly respected and supported communities of scientists—setting their own rules, pursuing knowledge according to the inner dictates of science, as opposed to civil or ecclesiastical authority, communicating freely among themselves—are the visible signs of that innovation. The earlier thinkers accepted the tension and lived accordingly. Their knowledge was essentially for themselves, and they had a private life very different from their public life. They were themselves concerned with getting from the darkness to the light. Enlightenment was a daring attempt to shine that light on all men, partly for the sake of all men, partly for the sake of the progress of science. The success of this attempt depended on scientists' freedom to associate with and speak to one another. And freedom could be won only if the rulers believed that the scientists were not a threat to them. Enlightenment was not only, or perhaps not even primarily, a scientific project but a political one. It began from the premise that the rulers could be educated, a premise not held by the Enlightenment's ancient brethren.

This project was a conspiracy, as d'Alembert said in the Preliminary Discourse of *l'Encyclopédie*, the premier document of the Enlightenment. It had to be, for, in order to have rulers who are reasonable, many

of the old rulers had to be replaced, in particular all those whose authority rested upon revelation. The priests were *the* enemies, for they rejected the claim of reason and based politics and morals on sacred text and ecclesiastical authorities. The philosophers appeared to deny the very existence of God, or at least of the Christian God. The old order was founded on Christianity, and free use of reason simply could not be permitted within it, since reason accepts no authority above itself and is necessarily subversive. There was a public struggle for the right to rule; for, in spite of the modest demeanor of the philosophers, they at the very least require rulers who are favorable to them, who have chosen reason. The right to freedom of thought is a political right, and for it to exist, there must be a political order that accepts that right.

In other words, an argument had to be made that the free pursuit of science is good for society, in order to persuade the most powerful element of society and thus guarantee the protection of that pursuit. In a simple formula, it had to be shown that the progress of knowledge was parallel to political progress. This is by no means a self-evident proposition, as anyone who has read Rousseau's *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, a powerful attack on it, knows. But it is the leading principle of Enlightenment and the ultimate ground of the prejudice that most people have in favor of freedom of thought and inquiry. I say prejudice because the reasons have almost been forgotten, and other kinds of thought hostile to freedom of thought are current. The old order offered roots and salvation, and the very latest thought is marked by nostalgia for that old order. The Enlightenment thinkers proposed a political science that could be used by founders, such as in America, in establishing principles and arrangements for a sounder and more efficient politics, and a natural science that could master nature in order to satisfy men's needs. These promises are what make reason not only acceptable within civil society but even central to it. A society based on reason needs those who reason best. The scientists were to be the most respected of men, taking the place of kings and prelates, because they are the evident sources of the good things for life, liberty and the pursuit of property. It was not precisely replacing one faith by another, because the new science, if it cannot be practiced by just anyone, can be understood by anyone, if he is trained in its method, and knowledge of the rights and duties of man requires the use of his reason.

The Enlightenment was a daring enterprise. Its goal was to reconstitute political and intellectual life totally under the supervision of philosophy and science. No conqueror, prophet or founder ever had a broader vision, and none had more stunning success. There is practically no contemporary regime that is not somehow a result of Enlightenment, and the best of the modern regimes—liberal democracy—is entirely its product. And throughout the world all men and all regimes are dependent on and recognize the science popularized by the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment inexorably defeated all opponents it targeted at the outset, particularly the priests and all that depends on them, by a long process of education that taught men, as Machiavelli put it, about "the things of this world." One need only read Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Book V, on education, to see how the reform of universities, particularly the overcoming of the theological influence, was essential to the emergence of modern political economy and the regime founded on it. Thus the academies and universities are the core of liberal democracy, its foundation, the repository of its animating principles and the continuing source of the knowledge and education keeping the machinery of the regime in motion.

The regime of equality and liberty, of the rights of man, is the regime of reason. The free university exists only in liberal democracy, and liberal democracies exist only where there are free universities. Marxists are right to say that the "bourgeois university" is essentially related to "bourgeois society," but not in the sense they intend. The university does not defend that society because the university merely reflects its interests, but because the balance of forces within this kind of society is such as most to need, respect and, hence, protect, freedom of thought. Earlier associations of thinkers were under theological-political supervision by unquestioned right. Fascism rejected reason and controlled the universities. When Hitler came to power, Karl Schmitt said, "Today Hegel died in Germany." Hegel was arguably the greatest university man there ever was. And communism asserts that the people, under the guise of the vanguard party, has become rational, so that the university no longer needs a special status—i.e., it can be controlled by the Party. Only in liberal democracy is the primacy of reason accepted, even though its citizenry is not understood to be simply and always reasonable. It assures a special status for the university, an exemption from the ordinary moral and political limitations

on what can be thought and said in civil society. The university is not the beneficiary of the freedom of thought accorded to all the members of society. All to the contrary, in the original project of modern society, the general freedom of thought was believed to be desirable in order to support the kind of thought proper to philosophers and scientists, which alone strictly deserves the name of "thought." At the outset the primary freedom was freedom of thought, both because reason is the highest faculty and because it is most necessary to the good society. Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Bacon, Locke and Newton had to be free to think and propagate what they learned if there was to be a new kind of society, a new dispensation for mankind.

The very special status of what came to be called academic freedom has gradually been eroded, and there hardly remains an awareness of what it means. There is barely a difference recognized in popular and even university consciousness between academic freedom and job security guaranteed by government, business or unions. It has become assimilated to the economic system and looks like self-interest of a kind that is sometimes approved of and sometimes disapproved of. The rights of science are now not distinguishable from the rights of thought in general, of any description whatsoever. Freedom of speech has given way to freedom of expression, in which the obscene gesture enjoys the same protected status as demonstrative discourse. It is all very wonderful; everything has become free, and no invidious distinctions need to be made. But it is too good to be true. All that has really happened is that reason has been knocked off its perch, is less influential and more vulnerable as it joins the crowd of less worthy claims to the attention and support of civil society. The semitheoretical attacks of Right and Left on the university and its knowledge, the increased demands made on it by society, the enormous expansion of higher education, have combined to obscure what is most important about the university.

The original intention of the reformed academies and universities was to provide a publicly respectable place—and a means of support—for theoretical men, of whom at best there are only a few in any nation, to meet, exchange their thoughts and train young persons in the ways of science. The academies and universities were to be engines in the progress of science. The right that reformers attempted to establish was for scientists to be unhindered in the use of their reason, in the areas in which they

are competent, to solve the problems posed by nature. Reason and competence are to be underlined here. "Intellectual honesty," "commitment" and that kind of thing have nothing to do with the university, belong in the arenas of religious and political struggle, only get in the way of the university's activity, and open it to suspicion and criticism of which it has no need. Freedom of thought and freedom of speech were proposed in theory, and in the practice of serious political reformers, in order to encourage the still voice of reason in a world that had always been dominated by fanaticisms and interests. How freedom of thought and speech came to mean the special encouragement and protection of fanaticism and interests is another of those miracles connected with the decay of the ideal of the rational political order. The authors of *The Federalist* hoped their scheme of government would result in the preponderance of reason and rational men in the United States. They were not particularly concerned with protecting eccentric or mad opinions or life-styles. Such protection, which we now often regard as the Founders' central intention, is only an incidental result of the protection of reason, and it loses plausibility if reason is rejected. These authors did not respect the many religious sects or desire diversity for its own sake. The existence of many sects was permitted only to prevent the emergence of a single dominant one.

The moment of the Enlightenment's success seems also to have been the beginning of its decay. The obscuring of its intention as a result of its democratization is symptomatic of the inner difficulties of its project. That project entailed freedom for the rare theoretical men to engage in rational inquiry in the small number of disciplines that treat the first principles of all things. This requires an atmosphere where the voice of reason is not drowned by the loud voices of the various "commitments" prevailing in political life. Knowledge is the goal; competence and reason are required of those who pursue it. The disciplines are philosophy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and the science of man, meaning a political science that discerns the nature of man and the ends of government. This is the academy. Dependent on it are a number of applied sciences—particularly engineering, medicine and law—that are lower in dignity and derivative in knowledge, but produce the fruits of science that benefit the unscientific and make them respectful of science. Thus the advantage of the knowers, who want to pursue knowledge, and that of those who do not know, those who want to pursue their well-being, are

served simultaneously, establishing a harmony between them. And thus the age-old gulf separating the wise from those who hold power is bridged, and *the* problem of the wise in civil society is solved. The project was a unity reflecting the unity of the intelligible order of nature, its parts organized according to the order of the parts of the whole, joined together finally in a survey of the articulated whole made by the culminating science—philosophy.

This project has lost its unity and is in crisis. Reason is unable to establish its unity, to decide what should be in it, to divide up the intellectual labor. It floats without compass or rudder.

If the university is indeed the product of the Enlightenment and is its visible presence in modern democracy, and if Enlightenment was a political project that undertook to alter the age-old character of the relation between wisdom and power, knowledge and society, it might be suspected that the crisis of knowledge that has become politically useful—i.e., the crisis of the university—and the crisis of liberal democracy, the political order dependent on knowledge, have something to do with the new relationship between the two promoted by Enlightenment.

I have included among the Enlightenment philosophers men like Machiavelli, Bacon, Montaigne, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza and Locke, along with the eighteenth-century thinkers like Montesquieu, Diderot and Voltaire, whose teachings are usually held to constitute the Enlightenment, because these latter were quite explicit about their debt to the originators of what the Enlightenment was in large measure only popularizing. The men of the Enlightenment proper were the first whose teachings were addressed not only, or primarily, to other philosophers or potential philosophers of the same rank, and who were concerned not only with those who understand but also with changing the opinions of mankind at large. Enlightenment was the first philosophically inspired "movement," a theoretical school that is a political force at the same time. The very word Enlightenment conveys this mixture of elements, as does Marxism, whereas Platonism and Epicureanism refer strictly to theories—which may have had this or that effect but whose essence is only theoretical. Although Plato and Aristotle had political philosophies, there is no regime to which one can point as a Platonic or an Aristotelian regime, in the sense that either thinker had founded the movement or party that

actually established the regime. But Enlightenment is certainly responsible for liberal democracy, as is Marxism for communism. Intellectual historians have frequently been too impressed by these recent events in philosophy and politics to recognize how recent they are, that they constitute a new phenomenon in both domains, and that what is most profound and interesting about Enlightenment is its radical and self-conscious break with the philosophical tradition in the mode and degree of its political activity.

The Enlightenment thinkers understood themselves to be making a most daring innovation: according to Machiavelli, modern philosophy was to be politically effective, while Plato and Aristotle, and all the ancients who followed them since Socrates founded political philosophy were politically ineffective. Machiavelli claimed that he taught the effective truth, and he and practically all those who followed him endeavored to be politically effective. Machiavelli follows Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*, who ridicules Socrates for being unable to defend himself, to avert insults or slaps in the face. The vulnerability of the philosopher would seem to be the starting place for the new reflection and the renewal of philosophy. This may seem trivial to many today, but the entire philosophic tradition, ancient and modern, took the relation of mind to society as the most fruitful beginning point for understanding the human situation. Certainly the first philosophy of which we have a full account begins with the trial and execution of the philosopher. And Machiavelli, the inspirer of the great philosophical systems of modernity, starts from this vulnerability of reason within the political order and makes it his business to correct it.

Some might say it was not concern with the fate of philosophers but the wish, in Bacon's phrase, to ease man's estate that motivated the modern thinkers. This, however, comes down to the same thing—a criticism of the ancient philosophers for their impotence, and a reflection on the relation of knowledge to civil society. The ancients were always praising virtue, but men were not made more virtuous as a result. Everywhere there were rotten regimes, tyrants persecuting peoples, rich exploiting poor, nobles keeping down commoners, men insufficiently protected by laws or arms, etc. Wise men saw clearly what was wrong in all this, but their wisdom did not generate power to do anything about it. The new philosophy claimed to have discovered the means to reform society and

to secure the theoretical life. If the two purposes were not identical, they were intended to be complementary.

It must be remembered that this was a dispute within philosophy and that there was an agreement among the parties to it about what philosophy is. The moderns looked to and disagreed with the Greek philosophers and their heirs, the Roman philosophers. But they shared the view that philosophy, and with it what we call science, came to be in Greece and had never, so far as is known, come to be elsewhere. Philosophy is the rational account of the whole, or of nature. Nature is a notion that itself is of Greek origin and requisite to science. The principle of contradiction guided the discourse of all, and the moderns presented reasoned arguments against those of their predecessors with whom they disagreed. The moderns simply took over a large part of ancient astronomy and mathematics. And they, above all, agreed that the philosophic life is the highest life. Their quarrel is not like the differences between Moses and Socrates, or Jesus and Lucretius, where there is no common universe of discourse, but more like the differences between Newton and Einstein. It is a struggle for the possession of rationalism by rationalists. This fact is lost sight of, partly because scholasticism, the use of Aristotle by the Roman Catholic Church, was the phantom of philosophy within the old order that was violently attacked by the modern philosophers, more out of antitheological ire than by dislike of ancient philosophy. Another reason why the essential agreement between ancients and moderns is no longer clear is the modern science of intellectual history, which tends to see all differences of opinion as differences of "worldview," which blurs the distinction between disagreements founded on reason and those founded on faith.

The very term Enlightenment is connected with Plato's most powerful image about the relation between thinker and society, the cave. In the *Republic*, Socrates presents men as prisoners in a dark cave, bound and forced to look at a wall against which are projected images that they take to be the beings and that are for them the only reality. Freedom for man means escaping the bonds, civil society's conventions, leaving the cave and going up to where the sun illuminates the beings and seeing them as they really are. Contemplating them is at once freedom, truth and the greatest pleasure. Socrates' presentation is meant to show that we begin from deceptions, or myths, but that it is possible to aspire to a nonconven-

tional world, to nature, by the use of reason. The false opinions can be corrected, and their inner contradictions impel thoughtful men to seek the truth. Education is the movement from darkness to light. Reason projected on to the beings about which at first we only darkly opine produces enlightenment.

The moderns accepted that reason can comprehend the beings, that there is a light to which science aspires. The entire difference between ancients and moderns concerns the cave, or nonmetaphorically, the relation between knowledge and civil society. Socrates never suggests that, even in the unlikely event that philosophers should be kings and possess absolute wisdom, the nature of the cave could be altered or that a civil society, a people, a *dēmos*, could do without false opinions. The philosophers who returned to the cave would recognize that what others take to be reality is only image, but they could not make any but the happy few able to see the beings as they really are. They would guide the city reasonably, but in their absence the city would revert to unreason. Or to put it in another way, the unwise could not recognize the wise. Men like Bacon and Descartes, by contrast, thought that it was possible to make all men reasonable, to change what had always and everywhere been the case. Enlightenment meant to shine the light of being in the cave and forever to dim the images on the wall. Then there would be unity between the people and the philosopher. The whole issue turns on whether the cave is intractable, as Plato thought, or can be changed by a new kind of education, as the greatest philosophic figures of the seventeenth and eighteenth century taught.

As Plato tells us, Socrates was charged with impiety, of not holding the same gods the city held, and he was found guilty. Plato always presents Socrates as the archetypical philosopher. The events of Socrates' life, the problems he faced, represent what the philosopher as such must face. The *Apology* tells us that *the* political problem for the philosopher is the gods. It makes clear that the images on the wall of the cave about which men will not brook contradiction represent the gods. Socrates' reaction to the accusation is not to assert the right of academic freedom to pursue investigations into the things in the heavens and under the earth. He accepts the city's right to demand his belief. His defense, not very convincing, is that he is not a subversive. He asserts the great dignity of philosophy and tries as much as possible to reduce the gap between it and good citizen-

ship. In other words, he temporizes or is insincere. His defense cannot be characterized as "intellectually honest" and is not quite to contemporary taste. He only wants to be left alone as much as possible, but is fully aware that a man who doubts what every good citizen is supposed to know and spends his life sitting around talking about virtue, rather than doing virtuous deeds, comes into conflict with the city. Characteristically, Socrates lives with the essential conflicts and illustrates them, rather than trying to abolish them. In the *Republic* he attempts to unite citizenship with philosophy. The only possible solution is for philosophers to rule, so there would be no opposition between the city's commands and what philosophy requires, or between power and wisdom. But this outline of a solution is ironic and impossible. It only serves to show what one must live with. The regime of philosopher-kings is usually ridiculed and regarded as totalitarian, but it contains much of what we really want. Practically everyone wants reason to rule, and no one thinks a man like Socrates should be ruled by inferiors or have to adjust what he thinks to them. What the *Republic* actually teaches is that none of this is possible and that our situation requires both much compromise and much intransigence, great risks and few hopes. The important thing is not speaking one's own mind, but finding a way to have one's own mind.

Contrary to common opinion, it is Enlightenment that was intent on philosophers' ruling, taking Socrates' ironies seriously. If they did not have the title of king, their political schemes were, all the same, designed to be put into practice. And they were put into practice, not by begging princes to listen to them but by philosophy's generating sufficient power to force princes to give way. The rule of philosophy is recognized in the insistence that regimes be constructed to protect the rights of man. The anger we experience on reading Socrates' censorship of the poets is unself-conscious, if we agree, as we willy-nilly do, that children must be taught the scientific method prior to any claims of the imagination on their belief or conduct. Enlightenment education really does what Socrates only tentatively proposes. Socrates, at least, tries to preserve poetry, whereas Enlightenment is almost indifferent to its fate. The fact that we think there should be poetry classes as well as education in reasoning helps us to miss the point: What happens to poetic imagination when the soul has been subjected to a rigorous discipline that resists poetry's greatest charms? The Enlightenment thinkers were very clear on this point. There is no discon-

tinuity in the tradition about it. They were simply solving the problem to the advantage of reason, as Socrates wished it could be solved but thought it could not. Enlightenment is Socrates respected and free to study what he wants, and thereby it is civil society reconstituted. In the *Apology*, Socrates, who lives in thousandfold poverty because he neither works nor has inherited, proposes with ultimate insolence that he be fed at public expense at city hall. But what is the modern university, with its pay and tenure, other than a free lunch for philosophy and scientists?

Moreover, the Enlightenment's explicit effort to remove the religious passion from politics, resulting in distinctions like that between church and state, is motivated by the wish to prevent the highest principle in political life from being hostile to reason. This is the intention in the *Republic* of Socrates' reform of the stories about the gods told by the poets. Nothing that denies the principle of contradiction is allowed to be authoritative, for that is the reef against which Socrates foundered. But Socrates did not think that church and state could be separated. He would have treated both terms as artificial. The gods are believed to be the founders of every city and are its most important beings. He would not have dared to banish them in defense of himself.

The Enlightenment thinkers took on his case and carried on a war against the continuing threat to science posed by first causes that are irrational or beyond reason. The gradual but never perfect success of that war turns the desire to be reasonable into the right to be reasonable, into academic freedom. In the process, political life was rebuilt in ways that have proved intolerable to many statesmen and thinkers, and have gradually led to the reintroduction of religion and the irrational in new and often terrifying guises. This is what Socrates would have feared.

But here I am only indicating the unity of the tradition, that Enlightenment is an attempt to give political status to what Socrates represents. The academy and the university are the institutions that incorporate the Socratic spirit more or less well. Yet the existence of these institutions underlines at the same time how they differ from Socrates, who founded no institutions and had only friends. And the attacks on these institutions made first by Rousseau and then by Nietzsche are attacks on Socratic rationalism made in a Socratic spirit. The history of Western thought and learning can be encapsulated in the fate of Socrates, beginning with Plato defending him, passing through the Enlightenment institutionalizing

him, and ending with Nietzsche accusing on him. The cherishing, for two and a half millennia, of the memory of this man, who was put to death by the city for philosophizing, ends with his spiritual execution in the name of culture at the hands of the latest of the great philosophers. Both city and culture are authorized by the sacred.

The meditation on Socrates is the inspiring theme of philosophy from Plato and Aristotle, through Farabi and Maimonides, Machiavelli, Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau and Hegel, to Nietzsche and Heidegger. Socrates is the complementary man whose enigmatic being leads to reflection on the nature of the knowers.

The Philosophic Experience

The character of the experience Socrates represents is important because it is the soul of the university. That experience and the relation to civil society of those who have it—which is the general formula for the problem of the university—is the continuous theme of Plato's and Xenophon's writings, which give us a flesh-and-blood Socrates, presenting the ambiguous material for judging him ourselves, showing us how such a man lives, the questions he raises, the different kinds of friends he has, his relations to the rulers, the laws and the gods, and the effects he has on the world around him. This forces us to ask, for example, what influence Socrates' humiliation of the political men had on the young Alcibiades, who was destined to become prominent among them. Socrates was not the first philosopher to have collided with the city, but he is the first to have benefited from a dramatic, poetic representation of his way of life, which placed him among the heroes and permitted, or rather necessitated, reflection not only about what he taught but also about the man himself and how he fitted into the city. This rich drama of the early philosopher who came to the attention of the city because he was a philosopher, presents all the questions of freedom of thought from all the angles, without any kind of doctrinairism, and hence provides us with a fresh view of the importance and also of the difficulties of such freedom. From the *Republic*, which really takes seriously only the demands of knowledge, to the *Laws*, which gives full attention to the competing demands of political life, Socrates as perfecter and as dissolver of the community reveals

all the facets of his activity. The difficulty he and the other philosophers contend with from the law is not to be confounded with society's prejudice against outsiders, dissenters or nonconformists but is, at least apparently, a result of an essential opposition between the two highest claims on a man's loyalty—his community and his reason. That opposition can only be overcome if the state is rational, as in Hegel, or if reason is abandoned, as in Nietzsche. However that may be, we have a record, unparalleled in its detail and depth, of this first appearance of philosophy, and we can apprehend the natural, or at least primitive, responses to it, prior to philosophy's effect on the world. This provides a view of the beginning at a time when we may be witnessing the end, partly because we no longer know that beginning.

The poetry written about Socrates by Plato and Xenophon is already in the defensive mode, a rehabilitation of the condemned man. The first statement of the city's reaction to Socrates is made by Aristophanes. What luck Socrates had! Not only did he command the pens of Plato and Xenophon; he also was the central figure of the greatest work of the consummate genius of comedy. *The Clouds* often arouses indignation in those who care little for Socrates but think serious matters are not laughing matters. Socrates' fate and Aristophanes' possible contribution to it trouble them. But Socrates was probably not of their persuasion. He laughed and joked on the day of his death. He and Aristophanes share a certain levity. Aristophanes does present a ridiculous Socrates and takes the point of view of the vulgar, to whom Socrates does look ridiculous. But Aristophanes also ridicules the vulgar. Reading him we, indeed, laugh at the wise as do the ignorant, but we also laugh at the ignorant as do the wise. Above all we laugh at the anger of the ignorant against the wise.

The Socrates of *The Clouds* is a man who despises what other people care about and cares about what they despise. He spends his life investigating nature, worrying about gnats and stars, denying the existence of the gods because they are not to be found in nature. His maps have only a tiny dot where Athens looms large to its citizens. Law and convention (*nomos*) mean nothing to him, because they are not natural but man-made. His companions are pale-faced young men totally devoid of common sense. In this academy, which has established itself in the free atmosphere of Athens, these eccentrics carry on their activities without appearing to be other than harmless cranks. They are poor, without any

fixed means of support. Socrates receives gifts and apparently countenances minor thefts, literally to keep body and soul together. There is no morality, but they are not vicious people, because their only concern is their studies. Socrates is utterly indifferent to honor or luxury.

Aristophanes recaptures for us the absurdity of a grown man who spends his time thinking about gnats' anuses. We have been too persuaded of the utility of science to perceive how far the scientist's perspective is from that of a gentleman, how shocking and petty the scientist's interests appear to a man who is concerned with war and peace, justice, freedom and glory. If science is just for curiosity's sake, which is what theoretical men believe, it is nonsense, and immoral nonsense, from the viewpoint of practical men. The world loses its proportions. Only Swift has rivalled Aristophanes in picturing the comedy of science. His description of a woman's breast seen through a microscope shows what science means, not in order to denigrate science but to make clear the harsh disproportion between the world most men cling to and the one inhabited by theoretical men.

What Aristophanes satirizes is the exterior of science, how the scientist appears to the nonscientist. He can only hint at the dignity of what the scientist does. His Socrates is not individualized; he is not *the* Socrates we know. He is a member of the species philosopher, student of nature, particularly of astronomy. The first known member of this species was Thales. He was the first man to have seen the cause of, and to predict, an eclipse of the sun. This means he figured out that the heavens move in regular ways that accord with mathematical reasoning. He was able to reason from visible effects to invisible causes and speculate about the intelligible order of nature as a whole. He at that moment became aware that his mind was in accord with the principles of nature, that he was the microcosm.

This moment contains many elements: satisfaction at having solved a problem; pleasure in using his faculties; fullness of pride, more complete than that of any conqueror, for he surveys and possesses all; certitude drawn from within himself, requiring no authorities; self-sufficiency, not depending, for the fulfillment of what is highest in himself, on other men or opinions or on accidents such as birth or election to power, on anything that can be taken from him; a happiness that has no admixture of illusion or hope but is full of actuality. But perhaps most important for Thales was

seeing that the poetic or mythical accounts of eclipses are false. They are not, as men believed prior to the advent of science, a sign from the gods. Eclipses are beyond the power of the gods. They belong to nature. One need not fear the gods. The theoretical experience is one of liberation, not only negatively—freeing the thinker from fear of the gods—but also positively, simultaneously a discovery of the best way of life. Maimonides describes the experience of the philosophic use of reason as follows: "This then will be a key permitting one to enter places the gates to which were locked. And when these gates are opened and these places are entered into, the soul will find rest therein, the eyes will be delighted, and the bodies will be eased of their toil and of their labor." What had previously been checked in man's soul comes into full play. Freedom from the myths and their insistence that piety is best permits man to see that knowing is best, the end for which everything else is done, the only end that without self-contradiction can be said to be final. The important theoretical experience leads necessarily toward the first principles of all things and includes an awareness of the good. Man as man, regardless of nation, birth or wealth, is capable of this experience. And it is the only thing men surely have spiritually in common: the demonstrations of science come from within man, and they are the same for all men. When I think the Pythagorean theorem, I know that what is in me at that moment is precisely the same as what is within anyone else who is thinking that theorem. Every other supposedly common experience is at best ambiguous.

Some of this experience still remains within the contemporary natural sciences, and it has a fugitive existence within the humanities. The unity of it all is hardly anywhere to be found or appreciated because philosophy hardly exists today. But it was always understood by philosophers, because they share the experience and are able to recognize it in others. This sense of community is more important for them than any disagreements about the final things. Philosophy is not a doctrine but a way of life, so the philosophers, for all the differences in their teachings, have more in common with one another than with anyone else, even their own followers. Plato saw this in Parmenides, Aristotle in Plato, Bacon in Aristotle, Descartes in Bacon, Locke in Descartes and Newton, and so on.

The tiny band of men who participate fully in this way of life are the soul of the university. This is true in historical fact as well as in

principle. Universities came to be where men were inspired by the philosophers' teachings and examples. Philosophy and its demonstration of the rational contemplative life, made possible and, more or less consciously, animated scholarship and the individual sciences. When those examples lost their vitality or were overwhelmed by men who had no experience of them, the universities decayed or were destroyed. This, strictly, is barbarism and darkness. I do not mean that philosophers were ordinarily present in universities any more than prophets or saints are ordinarily present in houses of worship. But because those houses of worship are dedicated to the spirit of the prophets and saints, they are different from other houses. They can undertake many functions not central to that spirit, but they remain what they are because of what they look up to, and everything they do is informed by that reverence. But if the faith disappears, if the experiences reported by the prophets and saints become unbelievable or matters of indifference, the temple is no longer a temple, no matter how much activity of various kinds goes on in it. It gradually withers and at best remains a monument, the inner life of which is alien to the tourists who pass idly through it. Although the comparison is not entirely appropriate, the university is also informed by the spirit, which very few men can fully share, of men who are absent, but it must preserve respect for them. It can admit almost anyone, but only if he or she looks up to and can have an inkling of the dignity of what is going on in it. It is itself always in danger of losing contact with its animating principle, of representing something it no longer possesses. Although it may seem wildly implausible that this group of rare individuals should be the center of what really counts for the university, this was recognized in the universities until only yesterday. It was, for example, well known in the nineteenth-century German university, which was the last great model for the American university. However bad universities may have been, however extraneous accretions may have weighed them down, there was always a divination that an Aristotle or a Newton was what they were all about.

The philosophic life is not the university. Until the nineteenth century most philosophers had nothing to do with universities, and perhaps the greatest abhorred them. One cannot imagine Socrates as a professor, for reasons that are worthy of our attention. But Socrates is of the essence of the university. It exists to preserve and further what he represents. In effect, it hardly does so anymore. But more important is the

fact that as a result of Enlightenment, philosophers and philosophy came to inhabit the universities exclusively, abandoning their old habits and haunts. There they have become vulnerable in new ways and thus risk extinction. The classical philosophers would not, for very good reasons, have taken this risk. Understanding these reasons is invaluable for our peculiar predicament.

Although the philosophic experience is understood by the philosophers to be what is uniquely human, the very definition of man, the dignity and charm of philosophy have not always or generally been popularly recognized. This is not the case with the other claimants to the throne, the prophet or the saint, the hero or the statesman, the poet or the artist, whose claims, if not always accepted, are generally recognized to be serious. They were always present, apparently coeval with civil society, whereas philosophers appeared late on the scene and had to make their way. And this has something to do with the problem, but it may be symptom rather than cause. I doubt that the people have much greater access to the typical experiences of prophets, kings and poets than to those of the philosophers. Great imagination, inspiration, intrepidity in the pursuit of glory are further from the ordinary lives of ordinary men than is the experience of reasoning found in the practical arts in daily use, like farming, building, shoemaking, and which is despised by the higher men. Socrates always has to remind his aristocratic interlocutors of these crafts and uses them as models of the knowledge aristocrats lack. But this may indicate part of the difficulty: the people want something higher, something exalted, to admire. And certainly Socrates' person, at first sight anyway, does not provide such an object of admiration, as Aristophanes' comedy makes abundantly clear. Moreover, and more important, the prophets, kings and poets are clearly benefactors of mankind at large, providing men with salvation, protection, prosperity, myths and entertainment. They are the noble bulwarks of civil society, and men tend to regard as good what does good to them. Philosophy does no such good. All to the contrary, it is austere and somewhat sad because it takes away many of men's fondest hopes. It certainly does nothing to console men in their sorrows and their unending vulnerability. Instead it points to their unprotectedness and nature's indifference to their individual fates. Socrates is old, ugly, poor, of no family, without prestige or power in the city, and babbles about Ether's taking Zeus's place.

The kings praised by poetry and illustrated in sculpture are ambiguo-

ous. On the one hand they seem to exist for their own sake, beauty in which we do not participate and to which we look up. On the other hand, they are in our service—ruling us, curing us, perhaps punishing us, but for our sakes, teaching us, pleasing us. Achilles is perfection, what most men can only dream about being, and is therefore their superior and properly their master. But he is also their warrior protector, who in order to save Greece overcomes the fear of death that other men cannot overcome. All the heroes are in the business of taking care of and flattering men, the *dēmos*, receiving admiration and glory as their pay. In some sense they are fictions of civil society, whose ends they serve. Not that they do not do the deeds for which they are praised, but the goodness of those deeds is measured, alas, by utility, by the greatest good of the greatest number. The statesman possesses virtues that are supposed to be good in themselves; but he is measured by his success in preserving the people. Those virtues are means to the end of preservation, i.e., the good life is subordinate to and in the service of mere life. If the theoretical life is a good way of life, it cannot, at least in its most authentic expression, be, or seriously be understood to be, in the city's service. It therefore has an almost impossible public relations problem. Socrates hints at this in his *Apology* when, ridiculously—since he was never angry and since he distinguished himself as a soldier exclusively in retreats—he likens himself to Achilles.

The defenselessness of philosophy in the city is what Aristophanes points out and ridicules. He, the poet, has much sympathy with the philosopher's wisdom but prides himself on not being so foolish. He can take care of himself, win prizes from and be paid by the people. His stance is that of the wise guy in the face of the wise man; he is city smart. He warns the philosophers and proves prophetic in comically portraying the city's vengeance. The generation of great men who followed Socrates, including Plato, Xenophon and Isocrates, took the warning very much to heart. Philosophy, they recognized, is weak, precisely because it is new, not necessary, not a participant in the city's power. It is threatened and is a threat to all the beliefs that tie the city together and unite the other high types—priests, poets and statesmen—against philosophy. So Socrates' successors gathered all their strength and made a heroic effort to save and protect philosophy.

Socrates in Aristophanes' story minded his own business, was the

subject of rumor and ridicule, until a father who was in debt because of his son's prodigality wanted to free himself of his obligations. Socrates' atheism was the right prescription for him, insofar as it meant that he need not fear Zeus's thunderbolt if he broke the law, if he perjured himself. The law is revealed to be merely manmade, and hence there is no witness to his misdeeds if he can escape the attention of other men. Philosophy liberates this foolish old man. His son, too, is liberated, but with the unexpected consequence that he loses reverence for his father and his mother, who are no longer under divine protection. This the father cannot stand and returns to his belief in the gods, who it turns out protect the family as well as the city. In a rage he burns down Socrates' school.

Aristophanes was prescient. The actual charges against Socrates were corrupting the youth and impiety, with the implication that the latter is the deepest cause of the former. And whatever scholars may say about the injustice of Aristophanes' or Athens' charges, the evidence supports those charges. In the *Republic*, for example, marriages are short-term affairs arranged only for reproduction, the family is dissolved, wise sons rule over and can discipline unwise fathers, and the prohibitions against incest are, to say the least, relaxed. The reverence for antiquity is replaced by reason, and the rule of fathers and the ancestral are disputed. This follows immediately from Socrates' procedures, and it entered into the bloodstream of the West, one of the innumerable effects of philosophy that, for better or worse, are to be found only there. Angry fathers are one of the constituencies mortally hostile to Socrates, who was not trying to achieve this result, or to reform the family. His example and the standards of judgment he invoked simply led to it.

Socrates collided not with culture, society or economy but with the law—which means with a political fact. The law is coercive. The human things impinge on the philosophers in the form of political demands. What philosophers need to survive is not anthropology, sociology or economics, but political science. Thus without any need for sophisticated reasons, political science was the first human science or science of human things that had to be founded, and remained the only one until sometime in the eighteenth century. The stark recognition that he depended on the city, that as he looked up to the heavens he lost his footing on the ground, compelled the philosopher to pay attention to politics, to develop a philo-

sophic politics, a party, as it were, to go along with the other parties, democratic, oligarchic, aristocratic and monarchic, that are always present. He founded the truth party. Ancient political philosophy was almost entirely in the service of philosophy, of making the world safer for philosophy.

Moreover, the law against which Socrates collided was the one concerning the gods. In its most interesting expression the law is the divine law. The city is sacred, it is a theological-political entity. (This is, by the way, why the *Theological-Political Treatise* is for Spinoza the book about politics.) The problem for the philosophers is primarily religion. The philosophers must come to terms with its authoritative presence in the city. Socrates in the *Apology* makes some suggestions as to how the philosopher must behave. He must deny that he is an atheist, although he remains ambiguous as to the character of his belief. Any careful reading of the *Apology* makes clear that Socrates never says he believes in the gods of the city. But he does try to make himself appear to be a sign sent from the gods, commanded to do what he does by the Delphic god. Nonetheless he is condemned.

He states his problem succinctly in explaining his way of life to his jurors:

If I tell you that I would be disobeying the god and on that account it is impossible for me to keep quiet, you won't be persuaded by me, taking it that I am ironizing. And if I tell you that it is the greatest good for a human being to have discussions everyday about virtue and the other things you hear me talking about, examining myself and others, and that the unexamined life is not livable for a human being, you will be even less persuaded.

The people recognize Socrates' irony, his talking down to them, and see how implausible his religious claims are. His irony appears as irony and is therefore not successful. But the truth, unadorned by the Delphic cover, is incomprehensible, corresponding to no experience his audience has. He would be closer to success in sticking to his first story. One can from this very description analyze the political situation. There are three groups of men: most do not understand him, are hostile to him, and vote for his condemnation; a smaller but not inconsiderable group also do not understand Socrates but glimpse something noble in him, are sympathetic to

him and vote for his acquittal; finally, a very small group knows what he means when he says the greatest good for a human being is talking about—not practicing—virtue (unless talking about virtue is practicing it). The last group is politically inconsiderable. Therefore the whole hope for the political salvation of philosophy rests with the friendliness of the second group, good citizens and ordinarily pious, but somehow open.

And it was to such men, the gentlemen, that philosophy made its rhetorical appeal for almost two thousand years. When they ruled, the climate for philosophy was more or less salubrious. When the people, the *dēmos*, ruled, religious fanaticism or vulgar utility made things much less receptive to philosophy. Tyrants might be attracted to philosophers, either out of genuine curiosity or the desire to adorn themselves, but they are the most unreliable of allies. All of this rests on a psychological analysis that was forced on the philosophers, who had previously not paid much attention to men or their souls. They observed that the most powerful passion of most men is fear of death. Very few men are capable of coming to terms with their own extinction. It is not so much stupidity that closes men to philosophy but love of their own, particularly love of their own lives, but also love of their own children and their own cities. It is the hardest task of all to face the lack of cosmic support for what we care about. Socrates, therefore, defines the task of philosophy as "learning how to die." Various kinds of self-forgetting, usually accompanied by illusions and myths, make it possible to live without the intransigent facing of death—in the sense of always thinking about it and what it means for life and the things dear in life—which is characteristic of a serious life. Individuals demand significance for this individual life, which is so subject to accident. Most human beings and all cities require the unscientific mixture of general and particular, necessity and chance, nature and convention. It is just this mixture that the philosopher cannot accept and which he separates into its constituent parts. He applies what he sees in nature to his own life. "As are the generations of leaves, so are the generations of men,"—a somber lesson that is only compensated for by the intense pleasure accompanying insight. Without that pleasure, which so few have, it would be intolerable. The philosopher, to the extent that he really only enjoys thinking and loves the truth, cannot be disabused. He cherishes no illusion that can crumble. If he is comic, at least he is absolutely immune to tragedy. Nonphilosophic men love the truth only

as long as it does not conflict with what they cherish—self, family, country, fame, love. When it does conflict, they hate the truth and regard as a monster the man who does not care for these noble things, who proves they are ephemeral and treats them as such. The gods are the guarantors of the unity of nature and convention dear to most men, which philosophy can only dissolve. The enmity between science and mankind at large is, therefore, not an accident.

This hostile relationship between the prevailing passions of the philosopher and those of the *dēmos* was taken by the philosophers to be permanent, for human nature is unchanging. As long as there are men, they will be motivated by fear of death. This passion is primarily what constitutes the cave, a horizon within which hope seems justified. Serving the community that lives in the cave, risking one's life for what preserves life, is honored. Vulgar morality is the code of this selfish collectivity, and whatever steps outside its circle is the object of moral indignation. And moral indignation, not ordinary selfishness or sensuality, is the greatest danger to the thinker. The fear that the gods who protect the city will be angered and withdraw their protection induces ecstasies of terror in men and makes them wildly vindictive against those who transgress the divine law. In the *Apology*, Socrates explains why he, such a good citizen, stayed out of Athens' political life. When he presided in the Council he refused to put to the vote—and was overridden—a motion to put to death the commanders of Athens' greatest naval victory because they had prudently refused to try to pick up the bodies of their dead from the water due to a storm that endangered the living. But divine law required the recovery of the bodies, and moral rage insisted on capital punishment for the commanders. Mere prudence cannot override the sacred. Socrates' philosophy has more in common with that prudence than it does with the popular moral fervor, which also caused his death, essentially for putting the prudent above the sacred. This fervor Socrates took to be the substrate of civil society, which would always in the end overpower and deform reason in civil society. Thus there are two possibilities: the philosopher must rule absolutely, or he, "like a man in a storm when dust and rain are blown about by the wind, stands aside under a little wall." There is no third way, or it belongs only to the intellectual, who attempts to influence and ends up in the power of the would-be influenced. He enhances their power and adapts his thought to their ends.

The philosopher wants to know things as they are. He loves the truth. That is an intellectual virtue. He does not love to tell the truth. That is a moral virtue. Presumably he would prefer not to practice deception; but if it is a condition of his survival, he has no objection to it. The hopes of changing mankind almost always end up in changing not mankind but one's thought. Reformers may often be intransigent or extreme in deed, but they are rarely intransigent in thought, for they have to be relevant. But the man who fits most easily into the conventions and is least constrained by struggle with them has more freedom for thought. The real radicalism of ancient thought is covered over by its moderation in political deed, and this misleads many modern scholars. The ancients had no tenure to protect them and wanted to avoid the prostitution to which those who have to live off their wits are prone. There is no moral order protecting philosophers or ensuring that truth will win out in the long, or the short, run.

So philosophers engaged in a gentle art of deception: There is no leaving civil society, no matter what Thoreau may have thought. But they cannot avoid being noticed. They are different. Therefore philosophers allied themselves with the gentlemen, making themselves useful to them, never quite revealing themselves to them, strengthening their gentleness and openness by reforming their education. Why are the gentlemen more open than the people? Because they have money and hence leisure and can appreciate the beautiful and useless. And because they despise necessity. Nietzsche said with some good reason that ancient gentlemen despised eating and sexual intercourse because these acts are forced on them by their animal nature, and they had the pride of the free. And although they tend to be reverent, they can be irreverent, and certainly are less prone to religious fanaticism than the many, because they are less in the grip of fear.

Aristotle in his *Ethics* shows how the philosopher appears as the ally of the gentlemen, speaking to them about the noble deeds that are their specialty (not his). All he apparently does is clarify for them what they already practice. But he makes slight changes that point toward philosophy. Piety is not even included in the list of the individual virtues. And shame, a quality of the noble and a great enemy of reason, is mentioned only in order to be banished from the canon. The virtuous man has nothing to be ashamed of, says Aristotle—an observation that fits Socras-

tes' view of himself but is not typical of gentlemen. And gradually Aristotle turns his readers' attention to the theoretical life, not by seriously theorizing with them but by pointing to the direction in which it lies. He makes it godlike and the completion of their own incompleteness, which they used to achieve by admiring Achilles and revering the Olympian gods. Now they admire the theoretical men who contemplate a thinking god. It is an open question whether the gentleman grasped the essence of philosophy less accurately in this way than does the modern man who respects the scientist because he provides him with useful things.

Similarly in his *Poetics*, Aristotle explains to gentlemanly lovers of the theater what tragedy is and what they get from it. But here too he changes things a bit. The poet is not, as Homer presents himself, inspired by the Muses but is an imitator of nature, i.e., of the same thing the philosophers study, and hence does not depict a world alien to the one studied by philosophy, or one that results from causes in conflict with those admitted by science. Aristotle explicitly connects poetry with philosophy. And the end, the final cause, of tragedy is said to be the purgation of pity and fear, the two passions that combined lead to enthusiasm, religious possession or fanaticism. Socrates had attacked the poets for appealing to those passions that make men ecstatic from terror at what they can suffer and their unprotectedness in their suffering. It is just here, according to Socrates, that reason should be invoked, to face the necessary, to remind men of the order in things that exists in spite of the accidents that happen to them individually. Pity and fear cry out for satisfaction, for attention, for being taken seriously. Above all, the world men incline to see is full of benevolent and malevolent deities who take their cases seriously. Poetry to succeed must speak to these passions, which are more powerful than reason in almost all men. Because poetry needs an audience it is, in Socrates' view, too friendly to the enemies of reason. The philosopher has less need to enter into the wishes of the many or, as the wise of our time would put it, into the drama of history, or to be *engagé*. This is why Socrates heightens the enmity between philosophy and poetry.

Aristotle, actually following Socrates' lead, suggests that the poet can be the doctor of mortals who are so mad as to insist they should be immortal. The poet, not the philosopher, can treat the passions that are dangerous to philosophy, which Socrates had to his great cost ignored. He

can arouse these passions in order to flush them out of the soul, leaving the patients more relaxed and calmer, more willing to listen to reason. Aristotle tells the poets they should present heroes who deserve their fates, whose sad ends are plausibly attributable to a flaw in their characters. Their suffering, while pitiable, is not promiscuous, a reproach to the moral order, or the lack of one, in the world. The effect of such drama would be to make men gentle and believers in the coherence of the world, in the rational relation of cause and effect. They are not made reasonable by this but are saved from hatred of reason and more disposed to accept it. Aristotle does not attempt to make scientists out of gentlemen, but he tempers their prevailing passions in such a way as to make them friends of philosophy. Socrates does much the same thing in the *Apology* when he addresses those who voted for his acquittal and tells them *myths* that tend to make death seem less terrible. The tales are not true, but they reinforce the gentleness that kept them from fearing and hence condemning Socrates. Socrates criticizes poetry in order to encourage it to be an ally of the philosophers instead of the priests.

Thus philosophy's response to the hostility of civil society is an educational endeavor, rather more poetic or rhetorical than philosophic, the purpose of which is to temper the passions of gentlemen's souls, softening the hard passions such as anger, and hardening the soft ones such as pity. The model for all such efforts is the dialogues of Plato, which together rival the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, or even the Gospels, introducing a new hero who excites admiration and imitation. To introduce a new hero, a new taste has to be established, and the taste for Socrates is unique, counter to all previous tastes. Plato turns the personage of *The Clouds* into one of those civilization-constituting figures like Moses, Jesus or Achilles, who have a greater reality in men's souls than do their own flesh-and-blood contemporaries. As Achilles is said to have formed Alexander the Great; Alexander, Caesar; and Caesar, Napoleon—reaching out to one another from the peaks across the valleys—so Socrates is the teacher of philosophers in an unbroken chain for two and a half millennia, extending from generation to generation through all the epochal changes. Plato insured this influence, not by reproducing Socrates' philosophy, in the manner of Aristotle or Kant, but by representing his action, more in the manner of Sophocles, Aristophanes, Dante and Shakespeare. Socrates is made to touch the prevailing passion of each of the different kinds of soul in such

a way as appear to be divinatory of their longings and necessary to their self-understanding. There are dialogues that touch the pious; some move the ambitious and the idealistic; others excite the erotic and still others the warriors and the politicians; some speak to the poets, others to the mathematicians; lovers of money are no more forgotten than are lovers of honor. There is hardly anyone who is not made indignant by one aspect or another of Socrates' discourse, but there is also hardly anyone who is not moved and heartened by other aspects. Socrates stated the case for all human types better than they could have stated it for themselves. (He, of course, also stated the problem with each of those types and their aspirations.) Plato demonstrates the need for Socrates and in so doing makes the need felt in his readers. It is not only Alcibiades who felt incomplete without Socrates.

In almost no case was there a total conversion of a man. Certainly none is ever depicted in the dialogues. Plato himself, and a few others, were converted to philosophy, and their self-discovery was possible because Socrates was more or less tolerated in Athens. The toleration of philosophy requires its being thought to serve powerful elements in society without actually becoming their servant. The philosopher must come to terms with the deepest prejudices of men always, and of the men of his time. The one thing he cannot change and will not try to change is their fear of death and the whole superstructure of beliefs and institutions that make death bearable, ward it off or deny it. The essential difference between the philosopher and all other men is his facing of death or his relation to eternity. He obviously does not deny that many men die resolutely or calmly. It is relatively easy to die well. The question is how one lives, and only the philosopher does not need opinions that falsify the significance of things in order to endure them. He alone mixes the reality of death—its inevitability and our dependence on fortune for what little life we have—into every thought and deed and is thus able to live while honestly seeking perfect clarity. He is, therefore, necessarily in the most fundamental tension with everyone except his own kind. He relates to all the others ironically, i.e., with sympathy and a playful distance. Changing the character of his relationship to them is impossible because the disproportion between him and them is firmly rooted in nature. Thus, he has no expectation of essential progress. Toleration, not right, is the best he can hope for, and he is kept vigilant by the awareness of the basic fragility of his situation and that of philosophy.

Socrates allies himself with those who are powerful in the city and at the same time fascinated or charmed by him. But the charm only endures so long as he does not confront their most important concerns. Crito, the family man, thinks of Socrates as a good family man. Laches, the soldier, thinks of Socrates as a good soldier. Those who get angry at Socrates and accuse him always see something the more gently disposed miss. Thrasymachus sees that Socrates does not respect the city. He sees the truth about Socrates, but he cannot, at least in the beginning, appreciate him. The others appreciate him, but partly because they are blind to what is most important to him. This provides the model for the political tactics followed by the philosophers from Plato up to Machiavelli. None was primarily political, for there was a definite limit on what one could expect from politics, and it was essential not to make the pursuit of the truth dependent on what is politically relevant. Politics was a serious study to the extent that one learned about the soul from it. But the practical politics of all the philosophers, no matter how great their theoretical differences, were the same. They practiced an art of writing that appealed to the prevailing moral taste of the regime in which they found themselves, but which could lead some astute readers outside of it to the Elysian Fields where the philosophers meet to talk. They frequently became the interpreters of the traditions of their nations, subtly altering them to make them open to philosophy and philosophers. They were always suspect, but they also always had their well-placed friends.

For this reason the form and content of the writings of men like Plato, Cicero, Farabi and Maimonides appear very different, while their inner teachings may be to all intents and purposes the same. Each had a different beginning point, a different cave, from which he had to ascend to the light and to which he had to return. Thus they appeared to be "relevant" without forming their minds to the prejudices of the day. This protected them from the necessity or the temptation to conform to what is most powerful. Classical philosophy was amazingly robust and survived changes as great as are imaginable, such as that from paganism to the revealed Biblical religions. Marsilius of Padua was as Aristotelian as was Aristotle, proving that the problems are permanent but their expressions are changing. We moderns think that a comparatively minor change, like that wrought by the French Revolution, necessitates new thought. The ancients held that a man must never let himself be overcome by events

unless those events taught something *essentially* new. They were more intent than were any men before or since on preserving the freedom of the mind. This was their legacy to the university. They, however, never let the principle become a dogma and never counted on its having any other ground than their wits. They were ever mindful of the responsibilities and the risks of their enterprise.

In sum, the ancient philosophers were to a man proponents of aristocratic politics, but not for the reasons intellectual historians are wont to ascribe to them. They were aristocratic in the higher sense of the word, because they thought reason should rule, and only philosophers are fully devoted to reason. But this is just a theoretical argument, since philosophers never really do rule. They were aristocratic in the vulgar sense, favoring the power of those possessing old wealth, because such men are more likely to grasp the nobility of philosophy as an end itself, if not to understand it. Most simply, they have the money for an education and time to take it seriously. Only technology, with its attendant problems, makes universal education possible, and therefore opens the prospect of a different kind of relationship of philosophy to politics.

The Enlightenment Transformation

The thinkers of the Enlightenment, as I have said, reproached all earlier philosophers for their powerlessness to help men and themselves. The *Republic's* formula, that power and wisdom must *coincide* if evils are ever to cease in the cities, is the perfect expression of what the Enlighteners meant. The necessary unity of power and wisdom is only a coincidence for the ancients, i.e., dependent on chance completely out of the philosopher's control. Knowledge is not in itself power, and though it is not in itself vulnerable to power, those who seek it and possess it most certainly are. Therefore, the great virtue for the philosophers in their political deeds was moderation. They were utterly dependent on the prejudices of the powerful and had to treat them most delicately. They subjected themselves to a fierce discipline of detachment from public opinion. Although they inevitably had to try to influence political life in their favor, they never seriously thought of themselves as founders or lawgivers. The mixture of unwise power and powerless wisdom, in the ancients' view, would

always end up with power strengthened and wisdom compromised. He who flirts with power, Socrates said, will be compelled to lie with it.

The uncompromisable difference that separates the philosophers from all others concerns death and dying. No way of life other than the philosophic can digest the truth about death. Whatever the illusion that supports ways of life and regimes other than the philosophic one, the philosopher is its enemy. There can never be a meeting of minds on this question, as both ancients and moderns agreed. It seemed only natural to the ancients to find their allies among the vulgarly courageous, i.e., those willing to face death with endurance and even intrepidity, although they required unfounded beliefs about the noble, which made them forget about the good. They share the common ground with the philosophers on which something higher than *mere* life rests. But they have no good *reason* for their sacrifice. Achilles' laments and complaints about why he must die for the Greeks and for his friend are very different from Socrates' arguments and the reasoning that underlies them for accepting death—because he is old, because it is inevitable, and because it costs him almost nothing and *might* be useful to philosophy. Anger characterizes Achilles; calculation, Socrates. Whatever sympathy there might be between the two kinds of men is founded, to speak anachronistically, on Achilles' misunderstanding Socrates.

The extraordinary device contrived by the new philosophy that produces harmony between philosophy and politics was to exchange one misunderstanding for another. *All* men fear death and passionately wish to avoid it. Even the heroes who despised it do so against a background of fear, which is primary. Only religious fanatics who believe certainly in a better life after death march gaily to death. If, instead of depending on the rare natures who have a noble attitude toward death, which goes against nature's grain, philosophy could without destroying itself play the demagogue's role—i.e., appeal to the passion that all men have and that is most powerful—it could share in and make use of the power. Rather than fighting what appears to be human nature, by cooperating with it philosophy could control it. In short, if philosophy should be revealed to man not as his moral preceptor but as his collaborator in his fondest dreams, the philosopher could supplant priest, politician and poet in the affection of the multitude. This is what Machiavelli meant when he blamed the old writers for building imaginary principalities and republics

that neglect how men actually live in favor of how they ought to live. He counsels writers to accommodate themselves to the dominant passions instead of exhorting men to practice virtues that they rarely perfect, whose goodness for the individuals who practice them is questionable, and the preachings of which are boring to everyone concerned. In a word, turn philosophy into a benefactor, and it will be thought to be good and will enjoy the power accruing to benefactors.

Philosophy can be used to conquer fortune, so Machiavelli announced. It was, of course, fortune—chance—that made it impossible for philosophers to rule, according to Plato. Fortune governs the relations between power and wisdom, which means that men cannot be counted on to consent to the rule of the wise, and the wise are not strong enough to force them to do so. The conquest of fortune meant for Machiavelli that thought and thinkers could compel and guarantee the consent of men. If this is possible, then the ancient philosophers' moderation looks like timidity. Daring in the political arena becomes the new disposition of the philosophers. Danton's "*de l'audace, encore de l'audace, toujours de l'audace*," is but a pale, merely political, duplicate of Machiavelli's original call to battle. Bacon's assertion that the goal of science is to "ease man's estate," Descartes' assertion that science will make man "master and possessor of nature," and the commonplace that science is the conquest of nature are offsprings of Machiavelli's revolution and constitute the political face adopted by modern philosophy.

The strategy adopted for the assault on the old regime had two parts—one belonging to natural science and the other to political science. First, Descartes proposed that the humble doctor, one of Socrates' ordinary examples of a reasonable artisan, lacking in the political or religious splendor that brings men to the center of the human stage, could, if science were to increase his power to heal a thousandfold, promise enough—if not eternity, at least an ever-increasing longevity—to gain men's attachment and disenchant the priest. Then, Hobbes proposed that if another humble type, the policeman, who protects men against those who administer violent death, could be made effective in a new political order based on fear of violent death, founded by a new kind of political scientist who addresses the passions in a new way, he could ward off the real dangers for men who had been made to look those dangers in the face and thereby away from fear of invisible powers and their ministers. Doctor

and policeman, enhanced by the application of science to their endeavors, were to be the foundations of a wholly new political undertaking. If the pursuit of health and safety were to absorb men and they were led to recognize the connection between their preservation and science, the harmony between theory and practice would be established. The actual rulers, after a couple of centuries of astute propaganda directing popular passions against throne and altar, would in the long run be constrained by their subjects and would have to enact the scientists' project. The scientists would, to use Harvey Mansfield's formula, be the hidden rulers. The ends pursued by politicians and the means they use would be determined by philosophers. Scientists would be free and get support, and scientific progress would be identical to political progress so conceived.

The scientists in this system belong to a world order of scientists, for national loyalties and customs are irrelevant to them as scientists. They are cosmopolitan. Gradually the political orders would have to be transformed, so that no particularity remains in the way of reason's operations or produces conflict between the scientist's loyalty to country and his loyalty to truth. There is only one science. It is the same everywhere and produces the same results everywhere. Similarly, there can, in principle, be only one legitimate political order, founded by, on, and for science. There may well remain individual nations with old but decaying traditions stemming from special experiences in the past, and attachment to them may tug at the scientists' cosmopolitanism. But the nations must all gradually become similar. They must respect the rights of man.

This doctrine of rights is the clear and certain rational teaching about justice that was intended to take the place of the ancient teachings, which were "like castles built on sand." In fact, rights are nothing other than the fundamental passions, experienced by all men, to which the new science appeals and which it emancipates from the constraints imposed on them by specious reasoning and fear of divine punishment. These passions are what science can serve. If these passions, given by nature, are what men have permission—a "right"—to seek satisfaction for, the partnership of science and society is formed. Civil society then sets as its sole goal that satisfaction—life, liberty and the pursuit of property—and men consent to obey the civil authority because it reflects their wants. Government becomes more solid and surer, now based on passions rather than virtues, rights rather than duties. These life-preserving passions act as the

premises of moral and political reasoning, the form of which is as follows: "If I desire to preserve myself, then I must seek peace. If I seek peace, then . . . etc." On the basis of such evident and deeply felt premises, men's allegiance to government can be a matter of reason rather than passionate faith. Such imperatives are the very opposite extreme from those enunciated in the Ten Commandments, which provide no reasons for obeying their injunctions and do not affirm fundamental passions but inhibit them. Men now owe their clarity about their ends to reasoners. They obey on rational grounds the law that protects them. And they respect, and demand that the government respect, the scientists who most of all can, by the higher use of reason, understand and tame hostile nature, including human nature. Government becomes the intermediary between the scientists and the people.

The rights teachings established the framework and the atmosphere for the modern university. A regime founded on the inclinations of its members is one where freedom, rightly understood, is primary. And the right to know immediately follows from the right to pursue one's own preservation, and to be the judge of the means to that preservation. And the right to know, of those who desire to know and can know, has a special status. The universities flourished because they were perceived to serve society as it wants to be served, not as Socrates served it or Thales failed to serve it. Thus it is indeed true that there is a special kinship between the liberal university and liberal democracy, not because the professors are the running dogs of the "system," but because this is the only regime where the powerful are persuaded that letting the professors do what they want is good. Without this "liberal" framework, the rights that professors claim for themselves are meaningless. The very notion of rights was first enunciated by the founders of liberalism, and its only home is in liberal society, in both theory and practice.

All of this meant that the philosophers switched parties from the aristocratic to the democratic. The people, who were by definition uneducated and the seat of prejudice, could be educated, if the meaning of education were changed from experience of things beautiful to enlightened self-interest. The aristocrats, with their pride, their love of glory, their sense that they are born with the right to rule, now appear to be impediments to the rule of reason. The new philosophers dedicated themselves to reducing the aristocrats back into the commons, removing their

psychological underpinnings and denigrating their tastes. This turn to the people can be understood as an appreciation of their decent desire for equality and willingness to contract not to do injustice in return for not suffering injustice, as opposed to the nobles' rejection of equality and willingness to risk suffering injustice in order to be first. Or it can be understood as a hardheaded strategy adopted in order to make use of the people's power. In this the modern philosophers imitated the ancient tyrants who found it easier to satisfy the people than the nobles who dared to rival them. No one has a naturally privileged position other than the knowers.

This turn should not be interpreted as a movement in philosophy from Right to Left. The emergence of a Right and a Left was a consequence of this turn to political activism, away from political accommodationism. The Left is the vehicle of modern philosophy and the Right is the opposition, largely religious, to it. Center is only the old liberalism, when a schism occurs in the philosophical party at the end of the eighteenth century, and a more radical egalitarianism threatens the project of science from within. Left means the transformation of society by Enlightenment, a possibility either not envisaged, or rejected, by all older thinkers. In modernity it is possible for there to be a right-wing philosopher, i.e., one who opposes the philosophic attempt to rationalize society; but in antiquity all philosophers had the same practical politics, inasmuch as none believed it feasible or salutary to change the relations between rich and poor in a fundamental or permanently progressive way. Democratic politics with a moral and intellectual foundation which commands the suffrage of the wise is strictly a modern invention, part and parcel of Enlightenment broadly conceived.

The philosophers, however, had no illusions about democracy. As I mentioned, they knew they were substituting one kind of misunderstanding for another. The gentleman thought that philosophic equanimity in the face of death comes from gentlemanly or heroic courage exercised for the sake of the noble. The man of the people, on the other hand, takes the philosopher's reasonableness about avoiding death to be a product of the passionate fear of death that motivates him. But the philosopher knows that the rational, calculating, economic man seeks immortality just as irrationally as, or even more so than, the man who hopes for eternal fame or for another life, of which the only sign or guarantee is lodged in

his hopes but for which he organizes his life. The utilitarian behaves sensibly in all that is required for preservation but never takes account of the fact that he must die. He does everything reasonable to put off the day of his death—providing for defense, peace, order, health and wealth—but actively suppresses the fact that the day must come. His whole life is absorbed in avoiding death, which is inevitable, and therefore he might be thought to be the most irrational of men, if rationality has anything to do with understanding ends or comprehending the human situation as such. He gives way without reserve to his most powerful passion and the wishes it engenders. The hero and the pious man are at least taking account of eternity. Although their wishes may make them mythologize about it, the posture they assume is somehow more reasonable. The philosopher always thinks and acts as though he were immortal, while always being fully aware that he is mortal. He tries to stay alive as long as possible in order to philosophize, but will not change his way of life or his thought in order to do so. He is sensible in a way that heroes can never be; he looks at things under the guise of eternity, as the bourgeois can never do. Therefore he is at one with neither. Only the life devoted to knowing can unite these opposites. Socrates is the tragic hero whose mind is full of the things artisans think about.

The great modern philosophers were as much philosophers as were the ancients. They were perfectly conscious of what separates them from all other men, and they knew that the gulf is unbridgeable. They knew that their connection with other men would always be mediated by unreason. They took a dare on the peculiar form of reasoning that comes from the natural inclinations. They seem to have been confident that they could benefit from the rational aspect and keep the irrational one from overwhelming them. The theoretical life remained as distinct from the practical life in their view as in the ancient one—theory looking to the universal and unchangeable while understanding its relation to the particular and changing; practice, totally absorbed by the latter, seeing the whole only in terms of it, as a theodicy or an anthropodicy, presented as God or History. Philosophy and philosophers always see through such hopes for individual salvation and are hence isolated. The modern philosophers knew that theory is pursued for its own sake but took an interest in promoting the opinion that, to paraphrase Clausewitz, theory is just practice pursued by other means.

The philosophers in their closets or their academies have entirely different ends than the rest of mankind. The vision of the harmony of theory and practice is only apparent. The moderns did not think, as did the ancients, that they would lose sight of the distinction between the two in identifying them. This is the most precise definition of their daring. What the ancients almost religiously kept apart, the moderns thought they could join without risk. The issue is: Does a society based on reason necessarily make unreasonable demands on reason, or does it approach more closely to reason and submit to the ministrations of the reasonable? The difficulty is illuminated by the popular contemporary misuse of a Greek word, *praxis*. It now means that there is no theory and no practice, that politics has been theoreticized and philosophy politicized. It expresses the overcoming of the distinction between the eternal and the temporal. This is surely a result of Enlightenment, although it goes counter to the intentions of the Enlighteners. The question is whether it is a necessary or only an accidental result.

It has long been fashionable in some quarters to treat the thinkers of the Enlightenment as optimistic and superficial. This was a view promoted in the wake of the French Revolution by reactionaries and romantics, the counter-coup of the religious and the poetic, which has had considerable and enduring success. The modern philosophers are alleged to have believed in a new dawn in which men would become reasonable and everything would be for the best. They did not, according to this popular view, understand the ineradicable character of evil, nor did they know, or at least take sufficient account of, the power of the irrational of which our later, profounder age is so fully aware. In these pages, I have tried to show that this is a skewed and self-serving interpretation. No one who looks carefully at the project these philosophers outlined can accuse them of being optimistic in the sense of expecting a simple triumph of reason or of underestimating the power of evil. It is not sufficiently taken into account how Machiavellian they were, in all senses of that word, and that they were actually Machiavelli's disciples. It was not by forgetting about the evil in man that they hoped to better his lot but by giving way to it rather than opposing it, by lowering standards. The very qualified rationality that they expected from most men was founded self-consciously on encouraging the greatest of all irrationalities. Selfishness was to be the means to the common good, and they never thought that the

moral or artistic splendor of past nations was going to be reproduced in the world they were planning. The combination of hardness and playfulness found in their writings should dispel all suspicion of unfounded hopefulness. What they plotted was "realistic," if anything ever was.

And as to superficiality, everything turns on what the deepest human experience is. The philosophers, ancient and modern, agreed that the fulfillment of humanity is in the use of reason. Man is the particular being that can know the universal, the temporal being that is aware of eternity, the part that can survey the whole, the effect that seeks the cause. Whether it is wonder at the apprehension of being or just figuring things out, reason is the end for which the irrational things exist, and all that seems to be merely brutish in man is informed by his rational vocation—so thought the philosophers. Christopher Marlowe understood both philosophy and Machiavelli very well when he put in the latter's mouth the phrase, "I hold there is no sin but ignorance." There are other experiences, always the religious, and in modern times the poetic, which make competing claims. But it is not immediately evident that their claims are superior to those of philosophy. The issue comes back again to the relative dignity of reason vs. revelation. The fact that popularized rationalism is, indeed, superficial is no argument against the philosophers. They knew it would be that way. (And, even in this, the democratic citizen, knowing and exercising his rights, is not the most contemptible of beings.) They were trying to make the central human good central to society, and Enlightenment was and remains the only plausible scheme for doing so.

On the face of this, it seems absurd to me to say that Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Leibniz, Locke, Montesquieu and even Voltaire (who might be considered a mere popularizer of these others) were less deep than Jacques Maritain or T. S. Eliot—to mention two famous contemporaries from whose mouths I learned as a young man that the Enlightenment was shallow. Rousseau, who initiated the profound school of criticism of Enlightenment's effects, nevertheless says that Bacon, Descartes and Newton were very great men, and he speaks of the "wise Locke." He knew that these were his theoretical kin, although he disagreed with them in crucial respects. The vulgarity of modern society, the object of so many complaints by intellectuals, is something the philosophers were willing to live with. After all, as Socrates points out, all societies

look pretty much the same from the heights, be they Periclean Athens or Des Moines, Iowa. A peaceful, wealthy society where the people look up to science and have enough money to support it is worth more than splendid imperia where there are slaves and no philosophy. Locke appears superficial because he was not a snob. There is no way he could make a parade of the magnificence of what he saw.

There is no doubt that these were serious men and that their contrivances have had a public effect unlike that of any philosophers or scientists before or since. The only comparable political events are the founding of what Machiavelli called new modes and orders by prophets—by Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, Romulus and (he implies) Jesus—which he called on the philosophers to imitate. Modernity is largely of these philosophers' making, and our self-awareness depends on understanding what they wanted to do and what they did do, grasping thus why our situation is different from all other situations. However contrary it may be to contemporary historical wisdom, the leading thread that runs through all the accidents of modern history is the philosophical doctrine of Enlightenment. Modern regimes were conceived by reason and depend on the reasonableness of their members. And those regimes required the reason of natural science in every aspect of their activity, and the requirements of scientific advance largely determine their policy. Whether it is called liberal democracy or bourgeois society, whether the regime of the rights of man or that of acquisitiveness, whether technology is used in a positive or a negative sense, everyone knows that these terms describe the central aspects of our world. They are demonstrably the results of the thought of a small group of men with deep insight into the nature of things, who collaborated in an enterprise the success of which is almost beyond belief. It penetrated and informed every detail of life. These are not men to be dismissed—but they can be questioned.

Swift's Doubts

One of the earliest questioners was Jonathan Swift, who saw what was intended and spoke up against it in the name of the ancients and of poetry. *Gulliver's Travels* is to early modern philosophy what Aristophanes' *The Clouds* was to early ancient philosophy. *Gulliver's Travels*

is nothing but a comic statement of Swift's preference for antiquity, casting his ancients as giants and noble horses, his moderns as midgets and Yahoos. He addresses the aspect that most concerns us, the establishment of the academies and universities—the Republic of Letters, to use Pierre Bayle's expression—in the chapter entitled "A Voyage to Laputa." Gulliver, after observing modern politics in Lilliput, goes to Laputa to see modern science and its effects on life. Laputa is a flying island ruled by natural scientists. It is, of course, a parody of the British Royal Society, in Swift's time a relatively recent association of the philosophers and scientists who had been tempted more into public and public life by modern thought. In this strange new land Gulliver finds a theoretical preoccupation abstracted from primary human concerns, one whose beginning point was not the human dimension, but which ends up altering it. On the Flying Island the men have one eye turned inward, the other toward the zenith. They are perfect Cartesians—one egotistical eye contemplating the self, one cosmological eye surveying the most distant things. The intermediate range, which previously was the center of concentration and defined both the ego and the pattern for the study of the stars, is not within the Laputian purview. The only studies are astronomy and music, and the world is reduced to these two sciences. The men have no contact with ordinary sense experiences. This is what permits them to remain content with their science. Communication with others outside their circle is unnecessary. Rather than making their mathematics follow the natural shapes of things, they change things so as to fit their mathematics. Their food is cut into all sorts of geometrical figures. Their admiration for women, such as it is, is due to the resemblance of women's various parts to specific figures. Jealousy is unknown to them. Their wives can commit adultery before their eyes without its being noticed. This absence of eroticism is connected with an absence of poetic sensibility. These scientists cannot understand poetry, and hence, in Gulliver's view, their science cannot be a science of man.

Another peculiarity of these men is described by Gulliver as follows. "What I chiefly admired, and thought altogether unaccountable, was the strong disposition I observed in them towards news and politics, perpetually inquiring into public affairs, giving their judgments in matters of state and passionately disputing every inch of a party opinion. I have indeed observed the same disposition among most of the mathematicians I have

known in Europe, although I could never discover the least analogy between the two sciences." Gulliver recognizes the political concern of theoretical science and doubts that it can comprehend the actual practice of politics. He also thinks the scientists have a sense of special right to manipulate politics. The Laputians' political power rests on the new science. The Flying Island is built on the principles of physics founded by Gilbert and Newton. Applied science can open new roads to political power. This island allows the king and the nobles to live free from conspiracies by the people—in fact, free from contact with them—while still making use of them and receiving the tribute that is necessary to the maintenance and leisure of the rulers. They can crush the terrestrial cities. Their power is almost unlimited and their responsibilities nil. Power is concentrated in the hands of the rulers; hence they are not forced even by fear to develop a truly political intelligence. They require no virtue. Everything runs itself, so there is no danger that their incompetence, indifference or vice will harm them. Their island allows their characteristic deformity to grow to the point of monstrosity. Science, in freeing men, destroys the natural conditions that make them human. Hence, for the first time in history, there is the possibility of tyranny grounded not on ignorance, but on science.

Swift objects to Enlightenment because it encourages a hypertrophic development of mathematics, physics and astronomy, thus returning to the pre-Socratic philosophy that Aristophanes had criticized for being unselfconscious or unable to understand man. Enlightenment rejected that moderate Socratic compromise between society and philosophy, poetry and science, which had governed intellectual life for so long and had made possible the foundation of political science. But, unlike pre-Socratic philosophy, which had no interest in politics at all, this science wished to rule and could rule. The new science had indeed generated sufficient power to rule, but in order to do so had had to lose the human perspective. In other words, Swift denied that modern science had actually established a human or political science. All to the contrary, it had destroyed it. Such a political science would, in the first place, have to understand man as man, and not as a geometric figure with flesh on it. In the second place, it would have to ensure the harmony between the good of science or scientists and that of a decent political community. On the Flying Island, neither condition is met. In particular, the scientists exploit the nonscien-

tists so as to live their version of the contemplative life in safety and comfort.

More simply put, Swift says that the scientists in power and with power don't give a damn about mankind at large. The whole conspiracy is like any other. The potential tyrant speaks in the name of the common good but is seeking a private good. Bacon's House of Solomon in the *New Atlantis* is just propaganda for the Flying Island. The scientists want to live as they please—delighting in numbers, figures, and stars—and are no longer obliged to hide their desires. The people still have means of making themselves felt, but they are essentially enslaved to what scientists provide for them. The scientists can cut off the sun's light to the world below.

There were elements of uncanny prescience in Swift's misanthropic and cranky satire on science. Natural science very quickly withdrew from the Enlightenment project as a whole, leaving the human parts of it to fend for themselves. The laws of nature were scientific, but natural science no longer claimed to be able to legislate human laws, leaving political science out in the cold, without a rational or scientific basis. Instead of being real partners in the business of overthrowing the antiscientific regimes of the past, the scientists became fellow travelers. Once theological supervision was defeated and everyone accepted the need for scientists instead of priests, science was free and, in principle, indifferent to the political regimes that need and use them. Early Enlightenment thinkers appear to have believed that there was a perfect coincidence between rational consent of the governed and the freedom of science. But science could not rationalize all men, and turned out not to have to, inasmuch as it became able to force whatever rulers there are to support it and leave it alone. When there were still rulers who would in principle persecute a Galileo if they found out what he was up to—because his investigations undermined their legitimacy, founded on sacred texts—scientists were natural allies of all opponents of these rulers. The fascination of early modern thought with the ecclesiastical authority as the one great danger to freedom of thought caused the philosophers to believe that the alliance formed to overthrow it was permanent. In the event, it turned out that once there were secular rulers who had no absolute commitment to a nonrational or unscientific view of nature, the nonhuman part of the Enlightenment was immune. Self-interest, the great modern motivating principle, no longer dictated concern for the other thinkers, and science

or reason, which appeared now to belong utterly to the natural philosopher, no longer gave the political and moral thinkers any warrant. In short, the common front presented by human and natural science in the name of democracy became an ideology.

The condition of natural science in the Soviet Union is the dreadful culmination of Swift's prediction. It is a tyranny founded on science. And natural science, alone among the learned disciplines, and natural scientists, alone among human beings, have been able to force the tyrants to leave them alone. A Soviet mathematician is as much a mathematician as an American mathematician, whereas a historian or a political scientist *must* be a sham, a party hack. Natural science can now flourish in the Soviet Union, because the Soviet tyrants have finally recognized their unconditional need of the scientists. They cannot endure the historians or political scientists, and they do not have to. These latter are not of the same species as the natural scientists, either in the eyes of the natural scientists or those of the tyrants.

Most unpleasant of all is that this dreadful regime gets its power to maintain its rule from the natural sciences. As sciences they are neutral, except with respect to what concerns their interests, and cannot judge Roosevelt to be superior to Stalin. This would have probably been true of pre-Socratics too, but they did not generate political power. They were indifferent to political regimes and provided aid and comfort to none. The new scientists are the cause of all. The pre-Socratics lived in splendid isolation as models of the theoretical life. Natural scientists now project an ambiguous image. Although they may be truly theoretical, they do not appear that way to untheoretical men. Their involvement in human things gives them a public role as curers of diseases and inventors of nuclear weapons, as bastions of democracy and bastions of totalitarianism. Andrei Sakharov is humanly most impressive, but his stand for human rights does not follow from his science and, to say the least, does not guarantee him the fellowship of other Soviet scientists. The new dispensation has protected science; it has done nothing to give scientists control over the uses of the results of science, or the wherewithal to know how to use those results, if they were indeed able to gain control over them. Natural science in the long run won out over the Party when its results clashed with Marxist orthodoxy, but it could not control the Party's political action. And no future tyrant is likely to imitate Hitler's mad

doctrinairism, which caused him to send Jewish scientists to his enemies to insure his defeat. Science in that sense moderates potential Hitlers—but only in that sense. In general it increases man's power without increasing his virtue, hence increasing his power to do both good and evil.

The total picture is one of great danger resulting from the political involvement of science. Some people assert that we have to reinvent politics in order to meet the danger. Swift tells us that politics was already reinvented by the founders of Enlightenment, and that is the problem. It turned out that natural science had nothing to say about human things, about the uses of science for life or about the scientist. When a poet writes about a poet, he does so as a poet. When a scientist talks about scientists, he does not do so as a scientist. If he does so, he uses none of the tools he uses in his scientific activity, and his conclusions have none of the demonstrative character he demands in his science. Science has broken off from the self-consciousness about science that was the core of ancient science. This loss of self-consciousness is somehow connected with the banishment of poetry.

Rousseau's Radicalization and the German University

Here Rousseau bursts on the scene, just at the moment of Enlightenment's victory and the establishment of the institutions of learning as the crown of society. An inverse Socrates, he reasserted the permanent tension between science and society, arguing that scientific progress corrupts morals and hence society, and he took the side of society. Virtue, "the science of simple souls," is what is most necessary, and science undermines virtue. It teaches a slack and selfish relation to other men and to civil society, it calls into question the principles of virtue, and it requires a luxurious and loose society in which to flourish.

The knowers who inhabit the academies lose sight of this, become easygoing and self-satisfied. The Ciceros and Bacons would not have been what they were if they had been professors. It was in living life as it really is, rather than in the artificially structured and protected universities, that they were able to grasp the human situation as a whole, recognize its inner tensions and take responsibility, without the protective cover of a faith in

progress and without the vanity of society's ignorantly bestowed honors. Professors had made reason into a public prejudice and were now among the prejudiced. They represented an unsatisfactory halfway house between the two harsh disciplines that make a man serious—community and solitude.

Rousseau insisted on making explicit the ambiguity about the relative dignity of theory and practice implicit in Enlightenment. Enlightenment presented the thinker not as the best man but as the most useful one. Happiness is the most important thing; if thinking is not happiness, it must be judged by its relationship to happiness. It is, Rousseau argues, more than doubtful that science produces happiness. Moreover, although Hobbes and Locke teach that man is rational, his rationality is in the service of passions or sentiments, which are more fundamental than reason. Thinking through their position that man is naturally a solitary being results in the recognition that speech, the condition of reason, is not natural to man. Man's specific difference from the other animals cannot, therefore, be reason. Enlightenment misunderstands both reason and feeling.

Rousseau's reasoning and rhetoric were so potent that hardly anyone who thought, as well as many who did not, could avoid his influence. After him, community, virtue, compassion, feeling, enthusiasm, the beautiful and the sublime, and even imagination, the banished faculty, had their innings against modern philosophy and science. The fringe bohemian, the sentimentalist, the artist became at least as much the teacher and the model as the scientist. Inspired by Rousseau, Kant undertook a systematic overhauling of Enlightenment's project in such a way as to make coherent the relationship between theory and practice, reason and morality, science and poetry, all of which had been made so problematic by Rousseau. Kant's survey of the whole of knowledge can also be read as a project for the fruitful coexistence of the disciplines in the universities. Rousseau had pointed out that the ancient tension between the thinker and society, supposedly resolved by Enlightenment, had resurfaced in new and very dangerous ways. Kant tried again to resolve it.

He, too, agreed that natural science had read free, moral, artistic man out of nature. He did not try to reform natural science, to translate man back into nature after the fashion of the ancients. What he did was to demonstrate that nature, as understood by natural science, does not com-

prehend the whole of things. There are other realms, not grasped or graspable by natural science, which are real and leave a place for the reality of the experience of humanity. Reason does not have to be abandoned to defend humanity, for reason can demonstrate that science has limits that it did not know, and reason can demonstrate the possibility of a freedom illegitimately denied by natural science. *Possibility* and *ground* become the themes in Kant, for much that is human had begun to appear to be impossible and groundless.

Kant accepted Rousseau's reasoning that freedom must be what distinguishes man, that it is denied by the kind of causation accepted in natural science, and that therefore the practical life, the exercise of moral freedom, is higher than the theoretical life, the use of scientific reason. In one of the most arduous and powerful theoretical efforts undertaken by man, he tried to demonstrate that nature is not all, that reason and spontaneity are not contraries. All this is established by reason, not by passion against reason. That effort lives in the three Critiques, the last great statement of liberal Enlightenment, the other strand of rationalism that coexists in the universities with Baconian-Cartesian-Lockean rationalism. The primary effort is to set limits to pure reason, to say to "proud reason, 'this far and no further,'" in such a way that reason will submit rationally. Kant's critical philosophy does not dictate to science what it must discover; it establishes the limits within which pure reason operates. It does the same for practical reason, thus turning David Hume's distinction between the is and the ought from a humiliation for moral reasoning into the basis for its triumph and its dignity. It further establishes the faculty of judgment, which can again allow man to speak about ends and the beautiful.

In this system not only does natural science have a secure place in the order of the university, but so also do morals and esthetics. However, the unity of the university is now Kant. These three kinds of knowledge (the true, the good, the beautiful in new guises) are given their domains by the three Critiques, but are not unified by being knowledge of aspects of a single reality. Aristotle's human sciences are part of the science of nature, and his knowledge of man is connected to and in harmony with his knowledge of the stars, bodies in motion and animals other than man. This is not the case with the human sciences after Rousseau, which depend on the existence of a realm entirely different from nature. Their

study is not part of the study of nature, and the two kinds of study have little to do with one another.

This new condition of the learned disciplines, which found its earliest expression in the German universities at the beginning of the nineteenth century and gradually spread throughout the Western universities, at first proved very fertile. The progress of the natural sciences, now unimpeded by theological or political supervision and emancipated from philosophy, continued and became even more rapid. And the human sciences, given a fresh vocation, came to a new flowering, especially in historical and philological studies. Man understood as a free, moral individual—as creative, as producer of cultures, as maker and product of history—provided a field for humane research taking man seriously as man, not reduced to the moved bodies that now constituted the realm of natural science. The serious goal that is necessary to make scholarship vital was provided by the sense that man could be understood by his historical origins; that moral and political standards could be derived from the historical traditions of the various nations, to replace the failed standards of natural right and law; that the study of high culture, particularly that of Greece, would provide the models for modern achievement; that a proper understanding of religion might provide a faith proof against critical reason. Scholars, for that moment, more than at any time since the Renaissance, seemed to be in the service of life, to be as useful as soldiers, doctors and workers. The great movements of careful historical research and textual criticism initiated in this heyday of the nineteenth century gave us nourishment which we have yet entirely to digest. The humanities took over the whole burden of instructing us about man, especially in morals and esthetics (the new science of the beautiful and the sublime).

However, the very condition of this exhilaration in the human sciences—the dualism nature-freedom—created problems from the outset and in the long run undermined the confidence of their practitioners or turned them back into mere erudites again. There was a haunting doubt as to the reality of the realm of freedom, which seemed to restore the richness of the phenomenon man. What are the relations between the two realms? At what point does the natural in man stop and the free begin? Is it really possible to limit the claims of natural science? Within Kant's system, if scientists can, as they claim, in the long run predict the

behavior of all phenomena, can one plausibly postulate a noumenal freedom, the expressions of which are predictable in the phenomenal field? Does not natural science presuppose mechanical causation, determinism and the reduction of all higher phenomena to lower ones, the complex to the simple, and do not the successes of that science in astronomy, physics, chemistry and biology attest to the truth of its presuppositions? New discoveries or speculations such as evolution called into question the independent or nonderivative character of mind. The very faculty that made it possible to set the limits of science and reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason* proved to be just another accidental effect of evolving matter. The ground of morals and esthetics disappeared. Natural science continued to seem substantial, while romanticism and idealism inhabited imaginary cities, sublime hopes but little more. Pessimism as a philosophical school came onto the scene. Joined to the health and expansiveness of natural science was the recognition that humane learning had itself failed to generate moral and political standards. All the study of the facts of national history and the invention of "folk-minds" could not provide guidance for the future, or imperatives for conduct. The learning was impressive, but it looked more and more to be the product of idle curiosity rather than the quest for knowledge of what is most needful. Philosophy, no longer a part of, or required by, natural science, was nudged over toward the humanities and even became just another historical subject. Its claim to be the ruler in the university no longer earned respect. There was a condominium with no higher unity. The humane learning could argue for equal rights and was to some extent formally accorded them, but that began to be "academic" and have little to do with the way things looked in the real world. The natural scientist was both the image of the knower and the public benefactor; the humanist, a professor.

The problem of the knower in the perspective of the modern understanding was formulated over and over again from the beginning of the modern university dispensation by the man, not a member of the German university, who, along with Kant, most influenced it—Goethe. A classic summation of his views is to be found in *Faust*, the only modern book that can be said to have made a national heroic model to rival those of Homer, Virgil, Dante and Shakespeare. The scholar Faust, meditating in his cell, translates the first line of the Gospel According to John, "In the beginning was the word (logos)"; then, dissatisfied with the description

he says "the feeling," which also does not quite do; finally and definitively he chooses to reinterpret it as "the deed." Action has primacy over contemplation, deed over speech. He who understands must imitate the beginnings. The act of the creator, not preceded and controlled by thought, is the first thing. The scholar with his reason misunderstands the origin because he lacks the vital force that lies behind the order of things. He trifles, piling up facts from which the informing principle has been extracted. Faust's relation to the perpetual student Wagner, who says he already knows much but wants to know everything, is paradigmatic. Only knowledge that serves life is good, and life is in the first place constituted by dark action, by fatal impulse. Knowledge comes afterward and lightens the world made by the deed. As painted by Goethe, Wagner looks slight and feeble. His idle love of knowledge is superficial compared to Faust's inchoate impulses. Although the opposition between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* is as old as philosophy, if not older, Goethe's moment is the first where the side of action is taken by theory itself, thus announcing the end of the ancient opposition. The theoretical life is groundless because the first thing is not the intelligible order but the chaos open to creativity. There can be no contemplation where there is nothing to see. Goethe took full account of the modern situation of knower and poet and put a question mark after learning that is not subordinate to the ends of life enhancement. In antiquity there had also been mere scholars, studying Homer and Plato without knowing quite why, and without being interested in the questions the writers raised, fascinated by meters or the reliability of texts. But the objection to these scholars was that they lacked the urgent desire to know the most important things, whereas the modern objection to scholarship is that it lacks the urgency of commitment to action. Most simply, the historian—the very model of the modern scholar—chronicles deeds. But if deeds are the most important thing, then the scholar is by definition inferior to the doer. Moreover, such a reasoner is incapable of the leap into darkness that the deed demands. Finally, if the doer is not a thinker, then it is doubtful whether the thinker can understand the doer. Does one not have to be akin to Caesar to understand him? To say that one does not have to be Caesar to understand him is equivalent to saying that one does not have to be anything to understand everything. The hidden premise of the realm of freedom is that action has primacy over thought. As Goethe saw, the modern scholarly giant has feet

of clay. It is also blind because it is lacking objects of cognition—as do all sciences—where there is only darkness.

The problem of scholarship is best illustrated in classical scholarship. The study of ancient Greece and Rome used to be the scholarly discipline par excellence, at times igniting brilliantly and illuminating the world, at others flickering and almost being extinguished. The study of the ancients has followed the ebb and flow of philosophic innovation in the West. Moments of great transformation have started with refreshment at the Greek source, its inspiration slaking a burning thirst. An overwhelming sense that something is missing is the serious motive for authentic, therefore careful and exhaustive, recovery of what has been lost. Greece provides the assurance that there was something better than what is. When the old treasures have been digested and the innovators are satisfied that they can walk on their own, the ancient seems less necessary and degenerates into habitual learning, a monument rather than a guiding light. The intoxicating atmosphere of the Renaissance, the rebirth of Greece, always possible because of its universality and the permanence of human nature, culminated in a specifically modern thought—beginning from Machiavelli's careful study and criticism of both Greeks and Romans—which could proudly assert its superiority to its ancient inspirers, winning the quarrel between the ancient and the modern.

Rousseau initiated a second Renaissance when he expressed his dissatisfaction with modernity, made possible by his knowledge of the Greek and Roman examples. "Ancient statesmen spoke endlessly of morals and virtue; ours speak only of commerce and money." Rousseau's use of his knowledge of antiquity—which was, although not scholarly, very profound—is a perfect model of the reason for having ancient thought available to those great individuals who, as Nietzsche put it, are untimely and need a vantage point from which to get their bearings and become the most timely of all. It is the old Greeks who make men both untimely and timely in crises. Nothing fancy, no infinite searching outside; the book in itself always intelligible, as long as human nature remains the same. This is the role played by the Greek authors throughout the wildly varying ages since they wrote, always Phoenix-like when they appear to have been consumed and are only ashes conserved by the scholars.

Rousseau's fervent appeal for modern man to look back to the ancient city, because it was whole and a true community, was the source of

the romantic longing to breathe the fresh air of Greece again. Its moral and esthetic health was what Rousseau conveyed so convincingly. He gave the impulse to all kinds of attempts at new communitarian beginnings, from Robespierre to Owen to Tolstoy and the kibbutz, an impulse still alive in contemporary thought. But most of all, as I have discussed earlier, his observations on the tension between Enlightenment and decent politics gave birth to the idea of culture. It was to the study of Greece or Sparta or Athens as models of cultures that Rousseau's reflection led. The motive for this study—which flourished particularly in Germany, where Rousseau's influence was most strongly felt, precisely because of Kant's and Goethe's predominance there—was to understand culture, with a view to the founding of a German culture. It was primarily Greek and Roman poetry and secondarily history to which the German thinkers turned for inspiration, and the scholars followed. It was distinctly not Greek philosophy. This was evident in Rousseau himself. The philosophers whose theoretical reflection was necessary to him were Bacon, Descartes and Newton, not Plato and Aristotle. The latter two just did not know the truth about nature. Whatever interest later scholarship had in them was as parts of Greek culture, as typical expressions of it and less interesting than poets, who are culture founders. The Greek philosophers were not valid interlocutors. Rousseau admired Plato and thought he had deep insight into human things, but rather more as a poet than a philosopher or scientist. Plato was indeed the philosopher for lovers, but Rousseau, without consulting Plato, taught that eros is the child of sex and imagination. Its activity is poetry, the source of what Rousseau understood to be the life-creating and -enhancing illusions and thereby the source of the ultimate grounds of the folk-minds that make peoples possible. In Plato, eros led to philosophy, which in turn led to the rational quest for the best regime, the *one* good political order vs. the plurality of cultures. So the discovery of Greek "culture" was contrary to Greek philosophy. And this particular difference, concerning the best regime as opposed to culture, proved fatal to reason. We can recognize this in a preliminary way in Weber's assumption that it is values rather than reasons that found and sustain communities.

Thus from the outset of this second Renaissance, scholars treated Greek philosophers more as natural scientists treat atoms than as they treat other natural scientists. They were not invited to join the serious

discussion of the scholars. All things Greek were subjected to our analysis based on the views of modern philosophy. This procedure alters radically what one expects to learn from them. Men of the Enlightenment looked down on Greek thinkers because they thought them wrong. Romantics respected them because their truth or falsity became a matter of indifference.

Schiller's distinction between naive and sentimental poetry is an example of the kind of categorization that became common. Homer's charm is a result of his not having seen what we see, his unawareness of the abyss. He still walked on enchanted ground, and his poetry lacked that reflectiveness imposed on us who know that the gods can depart. He was unaware of the death of gods and cultures as children are unaware of the death of men. He lived in the youth of the world. If we are to be whole and happy we must recover that direct relation to things men once had. But we must do it in the company of our awareness of the vulnerability of things. The artist has a greater responsibility than Homer knew because he does not merely imitate nature but creates it. A successful modern artist would be deeper, more fully self-conscious than was Homer.

The naive Homer belonged to a culture different from that of the sentimental Schiller, and has to be understood in his own cultural context. Naiveté consists in large measure in the lack of "historical consciousness," the belief that the greats are individuals to be understood individually and in the same way at all times. Plutarch believed he was showing forth images of greatness itself, while in fact his heroes are just Greeks and Romans, high expressions of their culture, from which they are inseparable. The awareness of this is the peculiarly modern superiority or insight.

Schiller was, of course, an unusually profound and sensitive reader. It is doubtful whether his reading of Homer teaches us very much about Homer, because it is too encumbered by what we now believe to be Romantic prejudices. But Homer, interpreted and misinterpreted by Schiller, contributed to his own artistic creation, which was founding a German literature and a German culture. It is an example of what some would call "creative misinterpretation." The faith in one's own vision, perhaps fed by the inspiration of others' visions, is what is important. An act uninformed by learning is the important thing. Implicit in what I am saying is that while Schiller's views are not true but are productive, there are true views, known presumably to scholars, which are not productive.

This is what Goethe implies. The scholar is an objective reasoner, the poet a subjective creator.

Here is where Nietzsche enters, arguing with unparalleled clarity and vigor that if we take "historical consciousness" seriously, there cannot be objectivity, that scholarship as we know it is simply a delusion, and a dangerous one, for objectivity undermines subjectivity. All of classical scholarship in Germany, with its exquisite sense of the historical determination of the mind, proceeded as though the mind of the German scholar were not so determined. The discovery of culture and the folk-mind means that there cannot be universal principles of understanding. Reason is a myth that makes mythmaking impossible to comprehend. Creativity and a science of human things cannot coexist, and since the science of human things admits that man is creative, the creative man wins the day. But scholars cannot behave creatively.

The discovery of culture as the element in which man becomes himself produces an imperative: Build and sustain culture. This the scholar cannot do. Culture is not only the condition of life, it is the condition of knowing. Without a German culture, the scholar in Germany cannot confront other cultures.

After the great moment in German thought—of Kant, Goethe, Schiller and Hegel, in which the rediscovery of Greece played so important a role—Greek scholarship retired to the universities, where it was again a dead piece of learning, unable itself to inspire or produce a compelling vision that could transform men. It became studied by bourgeois professors who educated bourgeois men for whom, as with Aschenbach, the Greeks were just "culture." The Greek splendor, which had formed such heroic figures just a half-century earlier, became a mystery. Nietzsche, acutely aware of this splendor and its disappearance from the scene, blamed the scholars, or rather blamed something that informed scholarship. A classical scholar who certainly would have been among the greatest who ever lived if he had not been called to philosophy, Nietzsche attempted the last great return to the Greeks. Like his German predecessors, he returned to Greek poetry in particular. But he coupled his taste for the tragedies with something very new—a radical attack on Socrates, the founder of the tradition of rationalism, which is the essence of the university. This is probably the first attack made by a philosopher on Socrates, and it is a violent one, continuing throughout Nietzsche's whole

career. What is fascinating for us in this is that Nietzsche, and Heidegger following him, are the first modern thinkers since the days of Hobbes, Spinoza and Descartes to take Socrates—or any classical philosopher's teaching—really seriously as an opponent, as a living opponent⁸ rather than as a cultural artifact. Socrates is alive and must be overcome. It is essential to recognize that this is *the* issue in Nietzsche. It is not a historical or cultural question. It is simply a classic philosophic disputation: Was Socrates right or wrong? Nietzsche's indictment of Socrates is that his rationalism, his utilitarianism, subverted and explained away that great stupidity which is noble instinct. He destroyed the tragic sense of life, which intuited man's true situation amidst things and allowed for creative forming of life against the terror of existence, unendowed with and unguided by any pre-existing forms or patterns. Instinct or fatality, prior to reason and vulnerable to reason, establishes the table of laws or valuations within which healthy reason works. A darkness on top of a void is the condition of life and creation, and it is dispelled in the light of rational analysis. The poet, in his act of creation, knows this. The scientist and the scholar never do. The act of creation is what forms cultures and folk-minds. There cannot be, as Socrates believed, the pure mind, which is trans-historical. This belief is the fundamental premise and error of science, an error that becomes manifestly fatal in dealing with human things. The method of the sciences is designed to see only what is everywhere and always, whereas what is particular and emergent is all that counts historically and culturally. Homer is not merely one example of an epic, or the Bible of a revealed text, but that is what science sees them as, and the only reason it is interested in them. The scholar turns away from them to comparative religion or comparative literature, i.e., either to indifference or to a flabby ecumenism compounded out of the lowest common denominator of a variety of old and incompatible creations. The scholar cannot understand the texts that he purports to interpret and explain. Schiller might be able to grasp the essence of the *Iliad* because as a creator he is akin to Homer. He could not understand Homer as Homer understood himself, because his mind was of a different historical epoch. But he could understand what it means to be a poet. A scholar can do neither. From the point of view of life, and from the point of view of

⁸Hegel, of course, studied ancient philosophy very well, but to incorporate it into modernity. It was not for him an enemy, and as a friend it was incomplete or imperfect.

truth, modern scholarship is a failure. Hegel ridicules the typical German gymnasium teacher who explains that Alexander the Great had a pathological love of power. The teacher proves the assertion by the fact that Alexander conquered the world. The teacher's freedom from this illness is attested to by the fact that he has not conquered the world. This story encapsulates Nietzsche's criticism of the German university and its classical scholarship. The scholar cannot understand the will to power, not a cause recognized by science, which made Alexander different from others, because the scholar neither has it nor does his method permit him to have it or see it. The scholar could never conquer the mind of man.

Nietzsche's return to the example of the ancients, and his rigorous drawing of the consequences of what German humane scholarship really believed, had a stunning effect on German university life and on the German respect for reason altogether. Artists received a new license, and even philosophy began to reinterpret itself as a form of art. The poets won the old war between philosophy and poetry, in which Socrates had been philosophy's champion. Nietzsche's war on the university led in two directions—either to an abandonment of the university by serious men, or to its reform to make it play a role in the creation of culture. The university ruled by Hegel, the modern Aristotle, had to be reconstituted, as the discredited medieval university had been made over by the now discredited Enlightenment university.

Nietzsche's effect was immediately felt by artists in all Western countries. He was the rage from 1890 on, and hardly any important painter, poet or novelist was immune to his charm. But his Hellenism had relatively little effect on that art. They took his characterization of modern culture and the conclusions of his arguments about the causes of its decadence and set about either popularizing them or attempting to found new cultures in various schools. They explored the freshly opened terrain of the id, seeking new forms. In the universities Nietzsche's first influences were to be found in relatively marginal or new disciplines like sociology or psychology, none of which was deeply influenced by Greek or Roman models. Within the study of classics a new generation of scholars turned more to the study of religion and poetry, concentrating on Greece prior to Socrates and on the irrational in its writers. In philosophy Nietzsche was the source of various schools of phenomenology and existentialism, and he finally became academically respectable.

But it was Heidegger, practically alone, for whom the study of Greek

philosophy became truly central, a pressing concern for his meditation on being. Heidegger, following Nietzsche, had cast the most radical doubt on the whole enterprise of modern philosophy and science. A new beginning was imperative, and he turned with open mind to the ancients. But he did not focus on Plato or Aristotle—although he reflected on them and was a most ingenious interpreter of them—because Nietzsche had dealt with them by way of Socrates. Heidegger was drawn instead to the pre-Socratic philosophers, from whom he hoped to discover another understanding of being to help him replace the exhausted one inherited from Plato and Aristotle, which he and Nietzsche thought to be at the root of both Christianity and modern science.

Strangely, the Hellenism of Heidegger did not give a strong impulse to the study of Greek philosophy. This may have something to do with the effects of the war and Heidegger's disgrace. He, too, had to reenter respectability by literary backdoors and on the wings of the very respectable academic Left. Neither carrier was much interested in the profound reflection on the ancients, which gave him his perspective on the contemporary scene. This popularizing made hay out of his description of our situation. The intellectuals who admired Heidegger took for granted, as neither he nor Nietzsche did, that Plato and Aristotle are not worthy of our serious concern. But that is where the issue lies. Are Nietzsche and Heidegger right about Plato and Aristotle? They rightly saw that the question is here, and both returned obsessively to Socrates. Our rationalism is his rationalism. Perhaps they did not take seriously enough the changes wrought by the modern rationalists and hence the possibility that the Socratic way might have avoided the modern impasse. But certainly all the philosophers, the proponents of reason, have something in common, and more or less directly reach back to Aristotle, Socrates' spiritual grandchild. A serious argument about what is most profoundly modern leads inevitably to the conclusion that study of the problem of Socrates is the one thing most needful.⁹ It was Socrates who made Nietzsche and Heidegger look to the pre-Socratics. For the first time in four hundred years, it seems possible and imperative to begin all over again, to try to figure out what Plato was talking about, because it might be the best thing available.

⁹Cf. Werner J. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche and the Problem of Socrates*, Cornell, 1974.

The history of classics since the Renaissance has consisted in momentary glimpses of the importance of Greece for man as man, everywhere and always, followed by long periods of merely scholarly study without any sufficient reason for it, living off the gradually dying energy provided by the original philosophic dynamos. Up to Nietzsche, the neglect of and contempt for Plato and Aristotle was the result of a belief that what they tried to do could be done much better. That is why Socrates was always in good repute. He was the skeptical seeker after the way to knowledge by means of unaided reason. He was not tied to any solution or system and thus could be seen as the originator and the inspirer who did not constrain the freedom of posterity. The current contempt for Plato and Aristotle is of an entirely different kind, for it is allied to contempt for Socrates. He corrupted them; they did not pervert him. We did not progress from Socrates, but he marked the beginning of the decline. Reason itself is rejected by philosophy itself. Thus the common thread of the whole tradition has been broken, and with it the *raison d'être* of the university as we know it.

Thus it was no accident that Heidegger came forward just after Hitler's accession to power to address the university community in Freiburg as the new rector, and urged commitment to National Socialism. His argument was not without subtlety and its own special kind of irony, but in sum the *decision* to devote wholeheartedly the life of the mind to an emerging revelation of being, incarnated in a mass movement, was what Heidegger encouraged. That he did so was not a result of his political innocence but a corollary of his critique of rationalism. That is why I have entitled this section "From Socrates' *Apology* to Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede*." The university began in spirit from Socrates' contemptuous and insolent distancing of himself from the Athenian people, his refusal to accept any command from them to cease asking, "What is justice? What is knowledge? What is a god?" and hence doubting the common opinions about such questions, and in his serious game (in the *Republic*) of trying to impose the rule of philosophers on an unwilling people without respect for their "culture." The university may have come near to its death when Heidegger joined the German people—especially the youngest part of that people, which he said had already made an irreversible commitment to the future—and put philosophy at the service of German culture. If I am right in believing that Heidegger's teachings are the most powerful

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-

done 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

¹⁰Up 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.

¹¹The 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

¹²Among 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 theoretic-

cal 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 teathed. 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 Daniël 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 Agamemnon 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 responsi-

bility, 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-

ern 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 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 pres-

sure 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.