

A LIFE OF LEARNING

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Charles Homer Haskins
Lecture for 1987



American Council of Learned Societies

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A Life of Learning

by

Carl E. Schorske

My first encounter with the world of learning took place, if family account is to be believed, when I entered kindergarten in Scarsdale, New York. To break the ice among the little strangers, my teacher, Miss Howl, asked her pupils to volunteer a song. I gladly offered a German one, called "*Morgenrot*." It was a rather gloomy number that I had learned at home, about a soldier fatalistically contemplating his death in battle at dawn. The year was 1919, and America's hatred of the Hun still ran strong. Miss Howl was outraged at my performance. She took what she called her "little enemy" by the hand and marched him off to the principal's office. That wise administrator resolved in my interest the problem of politics and the academy. She promoted me at once to the first grade under Mrs. Beyer, a fine teacher who expected me to work but not to sing.

Was this episode a portent of my life in the lulls of learning? Hardly. But it was my unwitting introduction to the interaction of culture and politics, my later field of scholarly interest.

I

When I taught European intellectual history at Berkeley in the early 1960s, I devoted a portion of my course to the way in which the same cultural materials were put to different uses in different national societies. One day, I gave a lecture on William Morris and Richard Wagner. The intellectual journeys of these two quite dissimilar artist-thinkers involved stops at many of the same cultural stations. Morris began by using Arthurian legend to champion a religion of beauty, then became an enthusiast for Norse mythology and folk art, and ended a socialist. Wagner traversed much the same itinerary as Morris, but in the reverse direction, starting as a social radical, then reworking Nordic sagas, and ending, with the Arthurian hero *Parsifal* in a pseudo-religion of art.

In the midst of delivering my lecture, I suddenly saw before me a picture from my childhood that I thought to be by Morris. (The picture proved to be the work of George Frederick Watts, then close to the Pre-Raphaelites.) It was “Sir Galahad,” a painting that hung in color reproduction on the middle landing of the staircase in our family’s house. Here was a beautiful knight in the best Pre-Raphaelite manner: a figure in burnished armour with a sensitive, androgynous face, mysteriously shrouded in misty bluish air.

After the lecture, I recalled how my mother loved that picture, how indeed she loved Morris’ *Defense of Guenevere*, and the literature of the Victorian medieval revival from Scott onward. Not so my father. He poured contempt on that feminine Sir Galahad. Now Wagner’s *Lohengrin* or the *Nibelungenlied*—that was a medievalism he could embrace. Father not only loved Wagner’s music, he believed in Siegfried the sturdy mythic socialist, as interpreted by G.B. Shaw in “The Perfect Wagnerite,” and in the anti-feminist interpretation of Wagner of that curmudgeon radical, H.L. Mencken. Mother accorded a hard-won tolerance—no more for the Teutonic longeurs of Wagner’s operas, but none for the abrasive virility of Mencken or my father’s Shaw.

Recalling hot parental arguments over such matters, I suddenly realized

that, in contraposing Morris and Wagner in my teaching, I had hardly left the family hearth. Freud would say that, here in the midst of my professional work as a historian, I was addressing in sublimated form a problem of the family scene. In any case, the episode brought home to me the power of my family in shaping the cultural interests and symbolic equipment with which I came to define my life.

As far as I know, my parents had no deliberate idea of pushing me toward an academic career. Autodidacts both, they respected learning, but what they cultivated was not scholarship but a kind of natural intellectuality. The concerts, theaters and museums that were their recreation became the children's education. They fostered our musical interests not just with private lessons but by taking us with them into their choral societies. On my father's two-week vacations we went by rail and ship on intensive sight-seeing trips: to New England historic sites such as Concord or the old ports of Maine; Civil War battlefields where my grandfather had fought in a New York German regiment; the great cities of the East and Midwest from Philadelphia to St. Paul.

Along with all the elite cultural equipment, my parents introduced us children, through their lives as well as by precept, to the realm of politics. My father, son of a German-born cigar-maker, inherited the radical propensities that went with that socially ambiguous trade. As a young New Yorker, father had campaigned for Henry George and Seth Low in their mayoral races, and followed the radical free-thinker Robert Ingersoll. World War I made father, despite his profession as banker, a life-long socialist. His deepseated hostility to America's entry into the war—both as an anti-imperialist and an ethnic German—gave his political orientation, though still progressive in substance, a bitter, alienated quality by the time I came along in his forty-fifth year. I inherited a marginal's sensibility from him as a German. When my mother, who, unlike my father, was Jewish, encountered unpleasant social prejudice during my high-school years, I acquired a second marginal identity. Perhaps this sense of marginality enhanced history's fascination for me and shaped my attitude toward it, at once wary and *engage*. For me, as for my parents, politics acquired particular importance, both as a major determining force in life and as an ethical responsibility.

II

In 1932 I entered Columbia College. From Seth Low Library the statue of Alma Mater looked upon a space that contained the principal tensions of the university's life: In the foreground was 116th Street, New York City's bisecting presence at the center of the campus. On the south side of the street stood the Sun Dial, a great sphere of granite, Columbia's Hyde Park Corner. Here were held the rallies for Norman Thomas, who swept the student presidential poll in 1932. Here I took the Oxford Oath, pledging never to support my government in any war it might undertake. Here too I watched in ambivalent confusion as anti-war sentiment slowly turned into its own opposite, militant anti-fascism, after Hitler occupied the Rhineland and Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. Political radicalism then bore no relation to university rebellion; it only invigorated the University's intellectual life.

In Columbia's strongly defined academic culture, Clio still presided over much of the curriculum. It is hard for us to remember in our day of disciplinary differentiation and autonomy how much all subjects were then permeated with a historical perspective. Having deposed philosophy and become queen of the world of learning in the 19th century, Clio, though not as glamorous as she had been, still enjoyed pervasive influence. She dominated the only compulsory course for undergraduates, a two-year introduction, Contemporary Civilization in the West. It was designed in the spirit of the New History of the early twentieth century, that amalgam of pragmatism, democracy and social radicalism that James Harvey Robinson, Charles Beard and John Dewey had injected into Columbia's university culture. The course presented us in the first year with three textbooks in modern European history: one economic, one social and political, and one intellectual. Our task was to generate out of these materials a synoptic vision of the European past, leading, in the sophomore year, to analysis of the American present.

The structure of undergraduate major programs also reflected the primacy of history as a mode of understanding in contrast to the

intradisciplinary analytic and theoretical concerns that tend to govern the program in most fields of the human sciences today. The programs in literature, philosophy, even economics, were saturated with the historical perspective on human affairs.

I avoided a history major, which I felt would tie me down. Instead, I enrolled in Columbia's two-year humanities Colloquium, which allowed one to construct one's own program. Colloquium was centered in great books seminars conceived in a more classical spirit than usual in the university's prevailing pragmatist culture. The seminars were team-taught by truly outstanding young faculty members, such as Moses Hadas and Theodoric Westbrook, Lionel Trilling and Jacques Barzun. Watching their play of minds on the texts awoke in me for the first time a sense of the sheer intellectual delight of ideas.

The thought of an academic vocation, however, was slow in coming. Actually, I aspired to a career in singing, which I had studied since high school days. By my junior year, the sad truth grew upon me that my voice simply had not the quality to support a career in *Lieder* and the kind of Mozart roles I dreamt of. In the same year, I enrolled in young Jacques Barzun's course in 19th-century intellectual history. Barzun simply overwhelmed his few students with the range of the subject and the brilliance of his exploration of it. At work on his biography of Hector Berlioz, Barzun injected much musical material into his course. While I shared with my classmates the exciting experience that this course turned out to be, I drew one rather personal conclusion from it: intellectual history was a field in which my two principal extra-academic interests—music and politics—could be studied not in their usual isolation, but in their relationship under the ordinance of time. I was ready to pursue it.

Yet something held me back. I felt myself to be an intellectual, interested in ideas; but could I be a scholar? Oddly enough, my Columbia experience offered no basis for an answer. As an undergraduate, I had only once been asked to prepare a research paper. Written exercises took the form of essays, oriented toward appreciation and interpretation of an issue or a text, with no particular attention to the state of scholarship or to the marshalling of empirical material to sustain a point of view. I found scholarly works often uninteresting; and when they truly impressed or captivated me, I found

them daunting, far beyond my powers to emulate.

The hue of resolution thus sicklied o'er by the pale cast of doubt, I sought advice. It was arranged for me to see Charles Beard, who was attending the American Historical Association's 1935 convention in New York. Perched on the bed in his overheated room in the Hotel Pennsylvania, Beard poured forth his scorn for the pusillanimity and triviality of a historical scholarship that had lost all sense of its critical function in the civic realm. He gave me a formula for a fine scholarly career: "Choose a commodity, like tin, in some African colony. Write your first seminar paper on it. Write your thesis on it. Broaden it to another country or two and write a book on it. As you sink your mental life into it, your livelihood and an esteemed place in the halls of learning will be assured."

The second counselor to whom I turned, Lionel Trilling, then in the fourth of his six years as an instructor in a still basically anti-semitic Columbia University, almost exploded at me. What folly to embark, as a half Jew, upon an academic career in the midst of depression! Thus both of my gloomy advisors spoke out of personal experiences that confirmed the gap between the high calling of learning and some seamier realities of the academy. Neither, however, could touch my central doubt, which was about my own fitness for scholarly research. There seemed no solution to that but to put it to the test. When I entered Harvard Graduate School in the fall of 1936, it was in a receptive spirit, but hardly with a strong vocation.

III

To pass from Columbia to Harvard was to enter another world—socially, politically and intellectually. My undergraduate stereotypes of the two institutions doubtless led me to exaggerate their differences. But stereotypes can have roots in realities. The very physical structure of Harvard seemed to express a conception of the relation between university and society different from that of Columbia.

Harvard was in the city but not of it. Where Seth Low Library looked

upon the city street, Widener Library faced the Yard, a greenspace walled off from the surrounding town. The Harvard houses, with their luxurious suites, dining halls with maid-servants, separate libraries and resident tutors, expressed a unity of wealth and learning in which each lent luster to the other. Whatever its social elitism, Harvard was, as Columbia was not, a citadel of learning seemingly impervious to political tensions. Harvard had no Sun Dial, no central space for student rallies. The students must have felt no need for one. If politics had a presence here, it did not meet the newcomer's eye. I was glad, given my self-doubts about a scholarly career, to take advantage of the opportunity that the University's calm environment offered for submersion in the work of learning.

The form of instruction at Harvard differed even more strikingly from Columbia's than its architectural form. At Columbia, we thought of our instructors as teachers, guides in the exploration of texts to make us generate intellectual responses. At Harvard, the instructors were more like professors, learned authorities dispensing their organized knowledge in lectures. The prevailing nineteenth-century idea of history, with its strong architecture of development and narrative structure, reinforced the authoritative lecture mode.

Thanks to the man who became my advisor and mentor, William L. Langer, I had no chance to follow the narrow road of Charles Beard's sardonic counsel about the strategy of the specialist. Langer urged me to take not just one seminar, but many, to gain experience in a variety of historical research techniques: economic, diplomatic, intellectual and social. Seminar experience—especially with Langer—slowly dispelled my misgivings about a life of research, and gave me the much-needed intellectual discipline to pursue it. The greatest impact on my scholarly outlook and value system came not from the seminars in modern history, but from an intensive exploration of Greek history with William Scott Ferguson. Despite the fact that I was a modernist without usable Greek, Ferguson took me on for an in-depth tutorial. Each week I went to his house for a two-hour discussion of the books he had assigned, ranging from the anthropology of pre-political tribes to Aristotle's Athenian Constitution or the structure of Roman rule in Greece. For my general examination I prepared a special subject on Aristophanes under Ferguson's guidance—an exercise which enabled

me for the first time to ground a whole literary *oeuvre* in a field of social power. Ferguson's critical tutelage really opened my eyes, as the field of classics has done for so many, to the possibilities of integrated cultural analysis. It also remained with me as a model of pedagogic generosity.

The comparative quiet of Harvard's political scene that I found on my arrival in 1936 soon changed. After 1938, when America began to face the menacing international situation in earnest, political concern became more general and intense within the university—and in me. Divisions on the issue of intervention ran deep, and many of us, young and old, felt impelled to debate it publicly. When political passions run strong, the relation between one's obligations to the republic of letters and to the civic republic can become dangerously conflated. Two personal experiences at Harvard brought this problem home to me.

The first occurred in 1940 in History I, the freshman course in which I served as a graduate teaching assistant. Its professor, Roger B. Merriman, a colorful, salty personality of the old school, passionately devoted to aristocratic Britain, believed, along with a few other staff members, that instructors had a public responsibility to get in there and tell the little gentlemen what the war was all about, to make them realize the importance of America's intervention. A few of us, across the often bitter barriers of political division, joined hands to resist the use of the classroom as an instrument of political indoctrination. My two partners in this effort were Barnaby C. Keeney, later the first director of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Robert Lee Wolff, who became professor of Byzantine history at Harvard. Quite aside from the principle involved, the experience of History I taught me how shared academic values could sustain friendships that political differences might destroy.

The second experience, of an intellectual nature, left a permanent mark on my consciousness as an historian. The graduate history club had organized a series of what were called, in jocular tribute to Communist terminology of the day, "cells," in which the student members prepared papers on problems that were not being dealt with in regular seminars. My cell took up the problem of contemporary historiography. We inquired into historical work in different countries as it evolved under the impact of recent history. I examined German historians under the

Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, not merely in terms of the political pressures upon them, but also in terms of the way in which specific cultural traditions in historiography, in confrontation with a new present, led to new visions of the past. I was astounded to discover that some of the most nationalist historians justified their doctrinaire nationalism by an explicit philosophic relativism. The value of this exercise in the sociology of knowledge was not only in understanding the work of historians of other nations. It also sensitized me and my fellow-apprentices in history to the fact that we too live in the stream of history, a condition that can both enhance and impede the understanding of the past. Above all, it made us aware as our elders, in their positivistic faith in objectivity, were not, of distortions that can result from our positions in society.

IV

The Research and Analysis Branch of the Office of Strategic Services, which I joined a few months before Pearl Harbor, has been rightly known as a second graduate school. My own intellectual debt to my colleagues there—especially to the German emigres and to a stellar group of economists, some Keynesian, some Marxist—is not easy to calculate. The whole experience, however, taught me that, much as I enjoyed contemporary political research, I was not by temperament a policy-oriented scholar.

When I was released from service in 1946—over thirty, the father of two children, without a Ph.D.—I found what proved to be an ideal teaching post at Wesleyan University. I was to stay for fourteen years. Of all my mature educational experiences, that of Wesleyan probably had the strongest impact on the substance of my intellectual life and my self-definition as an historian. Basic to both were the larger shifts in America's politics and academic culture in the late forties and fifties. I would have encountered them in any university. But only a small college could have provided the openness of discourse that made it possible to confront the cultural transformation across the borders of increasingly autonomous disciplines. At Wesleyan in particular, thanks to President Victor Butterfield's selection of imaginative faculty

members at the war's end, an atmosphere of vital critical exploration prevailed. From my colleagues I received the multi-disciplinary education for the kind of cultural history I soon felt drawn to pursue.

In the first two years at Wesleyan, I had no sense of either the intellectual dilemmas about to appear or the new horizons that opened with them. Like most returning veterans, whether students or professors, I felt only a joyful sense of resuming academic life where I had left it five years before. The freshman Western Civilization course that I was asked to teach had just been introduced at Wesleyan by assistant professors fresh from Columbia. For me it was a throwback to my own freshman year fourteen years earlier. Teaching four sections, I had more than enough opportunity to explore the riches of the course. Once again I encountered there, in all its optimistic fullness, the premise that the progress of mind and the progress of state and society go hand in hand, however painful the tensions and interactions may sometimes be.

In framing an advanced course in European 19th-century history, I also returned to a pre-war pattern to explore the relationship between domestic national histories and international development. Even my European intellectual history course, though fairly original in its comparative national approach to the social history of ideas, bore the stamp of the American neo-Enlightenment in which I had been formed at home and at Columbia. Its central theme was the history of rationalism and its relation to political and social change. Viable enough for constructing an architecture of intellectual development before the mid-19th century, the theme proved less and less useful as the 20th century approached, when both rationalism and the historicist vision allied with it lost their binding power on the European cultural imagination.

In the face of the fragmentation of modern thought and art, I fastened on Nietzsche as the principal intellectual herald of the modern condition. He stood at the threshold between the cultural cosmos in which I was reared and a post-Enlightenment mental world just then emergent in America—a world at once bewildering, almost threatening, in its conceptual multiplicity, yet enticing in its openness. After Nietzsche, whirl was king, and I felt rudderless. The conceptual crisis in my course set the broad question for my later research: the

emergence of cultural modernism and its break from the historical consciousness.

While in my teaching I tested the dark waters of modern culture, my research was still cast in terms set by my political experience and values from the years of the New Deal and the War. I could not bear, after five years of engagement with National Socialism in the OSS, to resume my dissertation on its intellectual origins, despite a substantial pre-war investment in the subject. Instead I turned to German Social Democracy as a thesis topic, and concurrently, to a more general study of the problem of modern Germany. Behind both lay a pressing concern with the direction of world politics. The two super-powers were in the process of creating through their occupation policies two Germanies in their own images: one socialist and anti-democratic, the other democratic and antisocialist. Accordingly, the saw-toothed course of the divide between East and West in German politics ran between the two working-class parties, Communist and Social Democratic. Before World War I, these two groupings had been part of a single party committed to both socialism and democracy. Why had that unity failed to hold together? What was the historical dynamic that made of democracy and socialism incompatibles in Germany? Contemporary questions surely stimulated my historical research, though they did not, I hope, determine its results. I realize now that I was writing not only analytic history, but a kind of elegy for a once creative movement that history had destroyed.

Parallel to the historical work on German Social Democracy, I explored directly the contemporary problem of Germany and American policy toward it for the Council on Foreign Relations. There I had an experience of the life of learning quite different from that of either government or academia. The members of the Council's German Study Group, headed by Allan Dulles, were intelligent, influential members of America's business and political elite. Most of them viewed German policy not as an area in which, as in Austria or Finland, some kind of accommodation was to be sought with the Soviet Union, but as a counter in the fundamental conflict between the two powers. I continued to believe in the goal of a unified but permanently neutralized Germany. That policy, which had been espoused by the OSS group with which I had worked, still seemed to me the only way of redeeming

in some measure the damage of the Yalta accord and of preventing the permanent division of Europe. Although the Council generously published my analysis of the German problem, it rejected my policy recommendations. It was my last fling at influencing U.S. policy from within the establishment.

The swift transformation of the East-West wartime alliance into the systemically structured antagonism of the Cold War had profound consequences for American culture, not the least for academic culture. It was not simply that the universities became a prey to outer forces that saw them as centers of Communist subversion. The break-up of the broad, rather fluid liberal-radical continuum of the New Deal into hostile camps of center and left deeply affected the whole intellectual community. The political climax of that division was Henry Wallace's presidential campaign in 1948, in which I myself was active. The bitter feelings it left in its wake only served to conceal a more general change in climate by which most intellectuals were affected, namely the revolution of falling expectations in the decade after 1947. The coming of the Cold War—and with it, McCarthyism—forced a shift in the optimistic social and philosophic outlook in which liberal and radical political positions alike had been embedded.

Wesleyan was a wonderful prism through which these changes were refracted. Several liberal activists of the social science faculty, including nonreligious ones, turned to the neo-Orthodox Protestantism of Reinhold Niebuhr to refound their politics in a tragic vision. Young scholars in American studies transferred their allegiance from Parrington and his democratic culture of the open frontier to the tough moral realism of Perry Miller's Puritans. For undergraduates, a new set of cultural authorities arose. Jacob Burckhardt, with his resigned patrician wisdom in approaching problems of power, and the paradoxical pessimism of Kierkegaard elicited more interest than John Stuart Mill's ethical rationalism or Marx's agonistic vision. Existentialism, a stoical form of liberalism, came into its own, with Camus attracting some, Sartre others, according to their political persuasion.

Nothing made a greater impression on me in the midst of this transvaluation of cultural values than the sudden blaze of interest in Sigmund Freud. Scholars of the most diverse persuasions to whom my

own ties were close brought the tendency home. Two of my teachers turned to Freud: the conservative William Langer used him to deepen his politics of interest; while the liberal Lionel Trilling, now battling the Marxists, espoused Freud to temper his humanistic rationalism with the acknowledgement of the power of instinct. Nor can I forget the day in 1952 when two of my radical friends, the Wesleyan classicist Norman O. Brown and the philosopher Herbert Marcuse suddenly encountered each other on the road from Marx to Freud, from political to cultural radicalism. Truly the premises for understanding man and society seemed to be shifting from the social-historical to the psychological scene.

All these tendencies pointed American intellectuals in a direction that Europeans, with the exception of the Marxists, had gone half a century before: a loss of faith in history as progress. At a less credal level, but one actually more important for the world of learning, history lost its attractiveness as a source of meaning. Formalism and abstraction, refined internal analysis, and a new primacy of the theoretical spread rapidly from one discipline to another as all turned away from the historical mode of understanding of their subjects. For intellectual history, this tendency had two consequences, one relating to its educational function, the other to its scholarly method.

Students now came to intellectual history expecting consideration of thinkers no longer studied in the disciplines to which they belonged. Thus in philosophy, the rising Anglo-American analytic school defined questions in such a way that many previously significant philosophers lost their relevance and stature. The historian became a residuary legatee at the deathbed of the history of philosophy, inheriting responsibility for preserving the thought of such figures as Schopenhauer or Fichte from oblivion. In economic thought, a similar function passed to intellectual history as the economists abandoned their historical heritage of general social theory and even questions of social policy to pursue an exciting new affair with mathematics.

An opportunity for intellectual historians, you say? Yes and no. We were simply not equipped to assume such responsibilities. At best we had paid little attention to the internal structure of the thought with which we dealt. We had a way of skimming the ideological cream off the intellectual milk, reducing complex works of art and intellect to

mere illustrations of historical tendencies or movements. The new ways of analyzing cultural products developed by the several disciplines revealed such impressionistic procedures as woefully inadequate. The historian thus faced two challenges at once: to show the continued importance of history for understanding the branches of culture whose scholars were rejecting it; and to do this at a moment when the historian's own methods of analysis were being revealed as obsolete and shallow by the very ahistorical analytic methods against which he wished to defend his vision.

For me, the issue first came to focus in dealing with literature. When I charged my Wesleyan friends in the New Criticism with depriving literary works of the historical context that conditioned their very existence, they accused me of destroying the nature of the text by my excess of relativization. One irritated colleague hurled at me the injunction of e.e. cummings: "let the poem be." But he taught me how to read literature anew, how the analysis of form could reveal meanings to the historian inaccessible if he stayed only on the level of ideas, of discursive content. Other colleagues in architecture, painting, theology, etc., similarly taught me the rudiments of formal analysis so that I could utilize their specialized techniques to pursue historical analysis with greater conceptual rigor.

By the fifties, the problems I have thus far described—the blockage in my course after Nietzsche, the changes in politics with the external and internal Cold War, the dehistoricization of academic culture, and the need for higher precision in intellectual history—all converged to define my scholarly agenda. I resolved to explore the historical genesis of the modern cultural consciousness, with its deliberate rejection of history. Only in a circumscribed historical context, so it seemed to me, could a common social experience be assessed for its impact on cultural creativity. Hence, a city seemed the most promising unit of study. Like Goldilocks in the house of the three bears, I tried out several—Paris, Berlin, London, Vienna—in seminars with Wesleyan students. I chose Vienna as the one that was "just right." It was indisputably a generative center in many important branches of twentieth century culture, with a close and well-defined intellectual elite that was yet open to the larger currents of European thought. Thanks to my Wesleyan colleagues, I had acquired enough intellectual foundation to embark upon a

multidisciplinary study.

V

In 1959, when I was on leave at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, a Berkeley colleague asked me to take over his course in intellectual history for two weeks. The class, although over 300 strong, had a spirit of collective engagement and responsiveness that I simply had not encountered before. I was seized by the feeling that Berkeley, with its bracing intellectual atmosphere, was the place I had to be. Ironically enough, I had turned down an offer there only four years before without even visiting the Berkeley campus. Throwing shame and protocol to the winds, I called a friend in the history department to ask if the job were still open. Fortunately it was.

To pass from Wesleyan to Berkeley in 1960 was surely to move from academic *Gemeinschaft* to academic *Gesellschaft*. Wesleyan, with its intimate and open interdisciplinary discourse, had helped me to redefine my purposes as a scholar. Berkeley influenced the direction of my historical work much less. But it forced me to think through issues that I had not considered since Harvard: the relation of the university to contemporary society, and my vocation as a teacher. The crisis of the sixties presented them in depth and urgency.

As a public university, Berkeley was, of course, especially vulnerable to the pressures of both state and society. When I arrived there in 1960, the shadow of the oath crisis of the fifties and the McCarthy years still lay heavily upon the faculty. Moreover, 100-year-old regulations barring political and religious speakers and campus political organization were still in force. Devised to protect the university's immunity from outside pressures of state and church, these rules had become under current conditions nettlesome restrictions of academic freedom. Until 1964, however, it was not students but faculty members who took the lead in pressing the issue of free speech. My department, for example, unanimously agreed to make a test case of the restrictive rules by inviting Herbert Aptheker, a self-proclaimed Communist

historian with a Ph.D. and solid publications, to address its graduate colloquium. When the administration, as it had to do, refused permission for the speaker and denied the department the funds to pay him, we took the colloquium off campus and held it in a church hall to dramatize our point: that a responsible educational function had, in the University of California, to be conducted as an unauthorized off-campus activity.

In another action, when a well-funded right-wing group conducted a statewide campaign of “education in Communism” in the towns of California, the History Department offered a public lecture series on comparative Communism to counteract propagandists masking as scholars. Our historians, of widely different political persuasions and with varied regional expertise, demonstrated to a large public by their example how the university could serve society by intellectualizing in analysis and rational discussion its most burning public problems.

With the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, American politics took a new turn, with profound consequences for the university. The pressure on it came not only from the right and the establishment, as in the fifties, but from the left and those with social grievances as well. This led at Berkeley to a shift in university attention from academic freedom and autonomy—a primary concern of the faculty—to political rights and the freedom of university members to pursue on campus their causes as citizens—a primary concern of students. In a liberal society, academic freedom and civic freedom are interdependent, but they are not the same. The first relates to the universal republic of letters, the second to the limited body politic. The recognition each must pay the other produces a delicate balance, easily upset when contestants locked in political struggle begin to see the university as a weapon or an obstacle. This is what happened at Berkeley. Political rights having been too long denied in the name of academic immunity, academic autonomy began to be put at risk in the name of political rights.

I became deeply involved as a minor actor in the ensuing crisis, serving first on the Emergency Executive Committee of the Academic Senate, then as Chancellor’s officer for educational development. Let me say only that I went through the same rhythm of anguish, illusion, hope and disabusement that is so often the lot of participants in intense social

crises. I realize now, on reflecting back, that once again my outlook and actions were marked by a kind of basic archetypical mental disposition to synthesize or unify forces whose dynamics resist integration. An ironic thrust seems to have characterized my intellectual work: In my book on Social Democracy, I had tried to comprehend socialism and democracy in a single perspective. In my intellectual history of Vienna, I had sought to integrate politics and culture in substance, historical and formal analysis in method. Now, in the crisis of university and society, I tried to reconcile academic autonomy and anti-war activism; in educational policy, faculty authority and educational renewal.

Those who experienced the university crisis will know how searing the sense of dissolution can be, even if tempered now and again by a sense of future promise. I certainly had hopes that a stronger university community would issue from the crisis, and drew strength from the fine group of collaborating colleagues who shared my convictions about both free speech and educational reform. But in the conflict-laden environment, two other, less homogeneous entities made the situation bearable: my department and my classes.

The history department was deeply divided over the issues of university policy; more, it contributed articulate spokesmen to almost every shade of opinion in the Academic Senate. Yet when the department met on academic business, its divisions on personnel or curricular problems did not follow those in Senate meetings on university issues. I could expect to find in a colleague who had opposed me on the Senate floor a staunch ally on a department matter. Professional ethos and collegiality remained intact. How different it was in other departments, such as politics and sociology, where methodological divisions tended to coincide with and reinforce political faction! My classes, buoyant and intellectually engaged through all the troubles, also were a continuous source of stability. However, the pressures of the crisis caused me to rethink my teaching.

Once, after a final lecture in intellectual history, I had an experience that gave me food for thought. My students gave me the customary round of year-end applause. After all the difficulties of that year, I floated out of the lecture room on cloud nine. Then, as I walked down the corridor, I heard a girl behind me say to her companion, in a voice

heavy with disgust: “And they call that a dialogue!” The remark jerked me back to earth. Beneath it lay two problems: first, student hunger for closer relations with the instructor, always present to some degree, but intensified by the unrest into a widespread rejection of the lecture system as “impersonal.” Second, the passage of the student revolt from politics to culture. The gap that had opened between generations in both moral and intellectual culture was real—and in fact, wider than that in politics. How to bridge that gap, and make it possible for the professor of one generation to deal with new questions arising in another: that was the problem my jaundiced critic raised for me. It crystallized my interest in new educational forms suited to the mass university.

To bring my ideas of the intellectual tradition into a new relation to students’ questions, I restructured my course on polycentric lines. While I continued to present my interpretation of intellectual history in the lectures, I displaced the locus of instruction into a series of satellite seminars. These were organized on topics defined not by me, but by graduate teaching assistants. I asked them to deal with the same thinkers as I presented in my lectures, but left each free to choose texts of those thinkers more suited to the particular theme each had selected. They came up with themes I could not have thought of at the time, such as “The Costs of Freedom,” or “The Idea of the Feminine in European Thinking.” The graduate T.A. thus became a mediator between my professional discipline and standards in which he had a vocational stake, and the concerns of the new generation of which he was a part. All gained by the enlargement of the TA’s authority. The satellite seminar not only helped satisfy the felt need for dialogue, which in fact any section system might provide; it also set up a healthy dialectic between the interpretive scheme of my lectures and the ideas and existential concerns of the students reflected in each seminar’s special theme.

As I followed the intellectual yield of the seminars, I was made aware of the deep truth of Nietzsche’s observation that a new need in the present opens a new organ of understanding for the past. Many ideas that have become more widespread, such as Foucault’s, first arose for me there. The satellite seminar system was adopted by a few others both in Berkeley and Princeton, and was effective for its time. In the

mid-seventies, however, when deference to the canonical in matters intellectual and social quiescence returned, it lost its appeal for graduate assistants. Well suited to its time, its time soon passed. In education as in scholarship, one must live in the provisional, always ready to acknowledge obsolescence and to adapt the forms of instruction to changes in both culture and society.

VI

I went to Princeton in order to save if possible my scholarly work. It was not the fault of the University of California, which I dearly loved, that I invested so much psychic energy in institutional life and in my teaching. But, given a tendency to neglect research for the other claims on the academic man, I could not resist the temptation of an appointment at Princeton University coupled with a half-time fellowship for three years at the Institute for Advanced Study.

At Wesleyan in the fifties, in response to the impact of the rightward shift of post-war politics and the de-historicization of academic culture, I had redefined my mission and method as an interdisciplinary intellectual historian. At Berkeley in the sixties, a university under the double pressure of America's conservative establishment and a recrudescing youthful left, I grappled in thought and action with finding the right relation between university and society. Part of a strong group of intellectual historians at Berkeley within a department of great diversity, I felt I was doing the work of my guild when I tried to adapt my subject to the intellectual and existential needs of a new generation of students.

At Princeton in the seventies, the center of my vocation shifted somewhat, from inside the history department to the humanities as a whole. Here again, a change in academic culture led me to redefine my function. Fundamental to it was the polarization of the social sciences and the humanities from each other. That process, which had begun in earnest in the fifties, now reached a new intensity. The concern with aggregate, depersonalized social behavior on the one side, and the concern with linguistic and structuralist textual analysis independent of

any social context on the other did not simply diminish the relevance of history to both groups. Their mutually exclusive conceptual systems also penetrated the discipline of history itself. Social historians, seeking the “otherness” of past cultures or of classes neglected in previous historiography, became more interested in the static cross-section of culture in the manner of anthropologists than in the dynamics of continuous transformation. At the other end of the spectrum, among intellectual historians, Hayden White lifted intellectual history clear of its social matrix by analyzing historiography as a literary construct. Synchronic recovery of a static slice of the past at one end of the spectrum, humanistic theory of forms at the other: these recapitulated within history itself in the seventies the loss of interest in process and transformation that had marked the new academic culture outside history in the fifties. In my Princeton history department, the dominant orientation was toward the social sciences.

I am no theorist and no methodologist. My way of addressing the problem of polarization in the *sciences humaines* and in history itself was through teaching—but this time not alone, and not purely within history. A small group of Princeton faculty from different departments joined me in devising an undergraduate inter-disciplinary program called European Cultural Studies. Its regnant idea was to bring to bear on the same objects of study the separate lights of social scientists, historians included, and humanists—the groups that elsewhere were pulling so far apart. All courses in the program were taught in two-person teams—hopefully one social scientist and one humanist. Few social scientists other than social historians could be induced to join the program. But the seminars did establish a field of discourse relating the social and ideational worlds to each other, despite the autonomism of our academic culture. In a more personal sense, teaching over some years with scholars in philosophy, architecture, Russian, German and French literature made of my last teaching decade a quite new learning experience. From one of the seminars, on Basel in the nineteenth century, issued a research project with my teaching partner, a study echoing the concern of my Berkeley years: the relation between university culture and social power.

During much of my scholarly life, I worked to bring the arts into history as essential constituents of its processes. In the last years, I have

reversed the effort, trying to project historical understanding into the world of the arts, through work with museums, architecture schools and critical writing for the larger public. The venue may change, the forms of one's engagement alter as one grows older and the world changes. Preparing this account, however, has made me realize all too clearly that I have not moved very far from the issues that arose in my formative years, when the value claims of intellectual culture and the structure of social power first appeared in a complex interaction that has never ceased to engage me.

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