The UNIVERSITY BOOKMAN

A Quarterly Review

Edited by Russell Kirk

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"After Such Knowledge, What Forgiveness?"

(An Essay-Review concerning Colleges and Universities)

STEPHEN R. MALONEY

PERHAPS ONE positive result of the turmoil and tumult on American campuses in the 1960s was that it made it almost impossible for politicians and commencement speakers alike to utter one of our hoariest national platitudes: "This is the finest generation of young people America has ever produced." It was a time as Clark Kerr, theoretical architect of the multiversity, reminds us of "campus disruption, abandonment of traditions, and seemingly insatiable demands for change . . . [that] exposed serious weaknesses in campus policies and procedures, and aroused public suspicion where there had been acceptance and approval."[1]

Academic Transformation: Seventeen Institutions under Pressure, one of a large number of Carnegie-commissioned books on higher education, contains an introduction by co-editor Verne A. Stadtman, 17 essays on North American colleges and universities, and an "epilogue and commentary" by the other editor, sociologist *extraordinaire* David Riesman. The essays provide a great deal of information about the recent time of troubles at schools ranging from Federal City College and Old Westbury to Swarthmore, Berkeley, and Harvard. A critical reading of the essays reveals serious inadequacies in American educators' conceptions of what a university should be.

Although the essayists are for the most part sincere, knowledgeable, and objective, they are often hindered in their analysis by their own political and educational preconceptions, a point acknowledged by Riesman: "Most of the writers of these reports tend to accept the definitions of the agenda provided by white campus radicals or black militants." In Riesman's less credulous view, "many activists have been geologists prospecting for emotion-laden issues on which to mobilize and to attack within the somewhat protected university precinct." Yet even writers as generally insightful and self-aware as Riesman or Nathan Glazer (who wrote the essay on CCNY) fail to see that their own academic and political liberalism, coupled with

1. *Academic Transformation*, edited by David Riesman and Verne A. Stadtman, a volume of essays sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (Mc-Graw-Hill Book Co., 1973, $12.50), p. xix.

a bias in favor of graduate education, makes them—to use one of the radicals' favorite phrases—part of the problem rather than the solution. Against the humane, yet often naive, assumptions of many of the essayists in *Academic Transformation*, we should balance the stern judgment of Eric Voegelin on modern education, "the art of adjusting people so solidly to the climate of opinion prevalent at the time that they feel no 'desire to know.' Education is the art of preventing people from acquiring the knowledge that would enable them to articulate the questions of existence. Education is the art of pressuring young people into a state of alienation that will result in either quiet despair or aggressive militancy."[2] Strong words, yet on the evidence of *Academic Transformation*, many of our better schools (such as Harvard) and some of our worse (such as Federal City) have become hothouses of liberalism, where no other plants are allowed to grow. The popular myth of a radicalized group of professorial Svengalis inducing their students to firebomb the ROTC building is inaccurate, although many professors have behaved irresponsibly. We can probably borrow to advantage in studying the universities John Chamberlain's view of the liberal bias in the media—that it is due to "contagion" rather than "conspiracy."[3]

In this regard, Professor Riesman's remarks about his attempts to convince Harvard students that there was not, in the mid 1960s, a widespread extramural movement against the Vietnam war are instructive. The students replied with disbelief; after all, "everyone" they knew (that is, everyone at Harvard and contiguous schools) was against the war. The frantic insistence on "doing one's own thing" that we heard during the last decade among college students masked the sad reality that these students were the paradigm of the "other-directed" lonely crowd that Riesman described in his most famous book. Such students wore their opinions the same way they wore their jeans and sloppy shirts. Absurd rumors, such as the one reporting that President Nixon had commissioned the Rand Corporation to formulate a plan for cancelling the 1972 elections, became Holy Writ on several campuses. Anyone who has ever been a conservative student or faculty member on a liberal campus knows well what it must have felt like to be a heretic in late fifteenth century Spain.

The tendencies toward conformity on campuses sometimes produce comical results. When I was teaching at William and Mary in the late 1960s, a sociologist took a survey of the sexual behavior of undergraduates at that rather conservative school. After the results became public and

2. "On Classical Studies," *Modern Age*, 17 (Winter 1973), p. 5.

3. "Freedom of the Press and National Security," *Modern Age*, 17 (Summer 1973), p. 239.

showed that William and Mary coeds had a much lower incidence of sexual experience than their peers at other schools, the student newspaper wrote an anguished editorial deploring the puritanism of the hard-to-seduce females.

Students seem to be very much aware of what is happening at other campuses. Reading straight through the essays in *Academic Transformation* gives one an almost chronic sense of *déjà vu*. At times, universities 3,000 miles apart appear to be essentially interchangeable in behavior. As I have stated, conformity through contagion (abetted by the instantaneous communication of an electronic media enamored of demonstrations and riots) rather than conspiracy explains the simultaneous appearance at many campuses of: Vietnam teach-ins; harassment of Dow Chemical recruiters; demands for the abolition of parietal rules (*in loco parentis* was the only Latin phrase most students knew); demonstrations against the Cambodian incursion and the Kent State affair; appeals for ethnic studies programs; occupations of academic buildings; Earth Day moratoria; and so on, and on. In addition to conveying information about what protests were "in" at a certain time, the media also served to initiate actions in other ways. In 1964 the SDS at the University of Rochester, where I was a graduate student, passed out leaflets one day announcing that CBS and NBC cameramen were going to be on campus that afternoon; thereupon a "spontaneous" demonstration in favor of Negro rights sprang up. (A few conservative students from out of town appeared with "Dear Dad, Please Send Money" placards.) The message soon became clear: a university's excellence was certified in the minds of many by the intensity and frequency of its demonstrations. A student body which "requested" rather than "demanded" (non-negotiably, of course) was contemptible.

Most students in the 1960s, like most students in other decades, were not radical. Yet, as several of the essayists in *Academic Transformation* observe, 30 or 40 dedicated radicals could, through skillful organization and "crisis engineering" turn out thousands of demonstrators for even trivial causes. At the University of Michigan, for example, students were willing to suffer arrest for the crucial issue of whether or not there was to be a student-operated bookstore. The great masses of adolescents gathered on our campuses (33,000 at Wisconsin, for instance) made it relatively easy to involve thousands of students in a demonstration; that this number of protesters constituted in many cases only an insignificant percentage of the undergraduate population proved small comfort either to the university administrators or to the police, who often had to deal with such mobs.

One of the best essays in the Riesman collection is Gerald Grant's on Antioch, the American educational world's version of the Land of Oz. The academic atmosphere there is not misrepresented by citing the saga of one

undergraduate. "The previous semester he had dabbled in six different courses, including one in which he had attempted to make a film about a nude girl in a bathtub of Jell-O." Antioch radicals, like those at other schools, have managed to develop a new academic career by becoming professional agitators and organizers, concentrating on unionizing hospital workers, grape pickers, and so on. Thus, their academic experience, such as it was, was not—from one point of view—a complete waste. Antioch officials, having ruined education at Yellow Springs, have set up miseducation centers in various places throughout the country.

SCHOOLS such as Antioch, Rutgers-Livingstone, and Old Westbury are the *reductio ad absurdum* of American education. The pressures for conformity that exist at such institutions, which often stress freedom and individuality in their catalogues, are extreme. Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University*, written of course in the bad old Victorian era, emphasizes that a university should seek "to open the mind, to correct it, to refine it." Cardinal Newman is not much read at Antioch; one wonders if he is even at Harvard. Such schools appear to "open" the mind and then let it spill out in every direction; the good schools are becoming more and more indistinguishable from the bad because of the "demands [as at Rutgers] for the relaxation or elimination of meritocratic standards." One could justifiably say that universities have no other *raison d'être* than to preserve exactly those standards. The rejection of meritocratic principles can lead to such excesses as those at Antioch, where two students in an ungraded program played "hearts" all year. Since a conservative at Antioch seems to be someone who voted for George McGovern rather than for Dr. Spock, there are strong pressures to institutionalize a levelling radicalism as university policy. Grant quotes the prospectus of the "student-run institute," whose members would major in "social change": " 'It is difficult to define precisely a political position which is open and restrictive at the same time.' " Difficult because contradictory?

The questionable status of Long Island's Old Westbury College (now called "Old Westbury II" because of the original college's failure) is illustrated by the cliché-ridden "Mandate for a New College" in New York State's *Master Plan* for higher education; the college will emphasize the student's "concern with the modern world"; moreover—and humorously—the college will seemingly stop the passage of time and "end the lockstep march in which one semester follows on another until four of youth's most energetic years have been consumed." Undisciplined, bored, and eventually disruptive student bodies have their origins in such faulty educational philosophy, if one can dignify it as such. Old Westbury's experimentation and modernism remind us of the narrator of Swift's *Tale of a Tub* ("What I say is true only when I say it . . ."). This college ensured an ideologically

homogeneous student body—while making great efforts to have precise racial quotas—by having the students approve or reject applications for admission. In the words of John A. Dunn, this "created pressures toward ideological conformity but did not result in institutional coherence." Precisely. Academic "communities" based on intellectual and chronological homogeneity inevitably bore themselves while they simultaneously see the outside world as the enemy.

Richard Taylor, distinguished philosopher at the University of Rochester, suggested long ago that the elimination of academic and social requirements, in the face of radical demands, grew more out of laziness than from any coherent educational or moral philosophy. When administrators and faculty took a "who are we to judge?" attitude, they lost a good deal of their moral authority. Ironically, while many students were calling for relevance and stressing the need to integrate their studies with political, social, and moral issues, colleges were abolishing parietal regulations under the rationale that the school had competence only in curricular matters. Many of our students have thus been put in a position similar to that of the "misfits" in *Brave New World* who did not want to engage in the obligatory orgies. I do not exaggerate; a distinguished, liberal faculty member at Wesleyan University told me that abolition of parietal regulations at his school had led, in several cases, to "concubinage." This man described his administration's response to any radical demands, however bizarre: "Oh sure."

The elimination of academic requirements and the institution of questionable programs of study have also harmed many schools like Federal City College. In the words of Irene Tinker, "The fight over black studies exacerbated friction at the college and caused faculty, administration, and board to adopt roles which proved mutually antagonistic." Many students follow no coherent plan of study; they switch aimlessly from one major to another. Professors confront classes which have no common body of knowledge—one can no longer even be certain his students have read the *Catcher in the Rye*, let alone the *Odyssey*.

On the one hand, one can say that the world will little note nor long remember the Federal Cities, the Old Westburys, the Antiochs as they collapse because of their Lagado-like abstractions and obsessions. But one must regret the deceptions being visited upon many students—not to mention the parents who stay home and pay the bills—who came to such schools in search of an education and ended up, in the words of an Antioch girl, paying "$4,500 a year to goof off." Or the blacks at Federal City who watched white radicals—now mostly departed—argue Marxian philosophical subleties while the curriculum suffered.

Few critics will deny that thoughtful students—as distinguished from professional radicals—have many valid grievances. Educational conservative Marion Montgomery, of the University of Georgia, puts it this way: "The

student controversy with the multiversity daily evidences the point. We have moved from the professor on one end of the log, the student on the other, into a world where there is no log, where both float free. The . . . easy access of portable grants and the multiplication of fringe benefits in the fierce administrative bidding [for prestigious faculty] have made everything available to teacher and to student, except the log—the classroom, a still place within which minds only move."[4] Robert Nisbet, the sociologist, also emphasizes, in *The Decline of the Academic Dogma*, the deleterious effect of grants upon the faculties at many universities. One sad consequence of the rapid inflow of governmental funds into large universities was that it enabled them to "raid" some of the good smaller schools: the Bowdoins, the Swarthmores, the William and Marys, and thus further to weaken undergraduate education in this country.

WHEN Cardinal Newman wrote *The Rise and Progress of Universities* he could not have foreseen what Zelda Gamson, speaking of Michigan, calls "the new breed of academic man," the grantsman who taught little and researched much. The university, which Newman described as "a place for the communication and circulation of thought, by means of personal intercourse," became more and more a fragmented place where specialists had personal intercourse only with other specialists. The proliferation of teachers who did not teach was counterbalanced by large increases in the number of academic counsellors, "ombudsmen" (now probably called "ombudspersons"), psychological personnel, and teaching assistants. At the many schools the goal of the undergraduate program appears to have been to keep the students quiet so that the legislators would not cut the budget. Thus the emphasis on the modern version of *panem et circenses*: rock concerts, moratoria, "happenings." As usual, Newman's words went unheard: "Do not say, the people must be educated, when, after all, you only mean amused, refreshed, soothed, put into good spirits, and good humor, or kept from vicious excesses."

More than the Vietnam war, the twin phenomena of ideological conformity and pedagogical unconcern played the major roles in frustrating students and providing fertile soil for radicals to plant their mischief. "It will be sufficient to state," says Eric Voegelin, "that the students have good reason to revolt; and if the reasons they actually advance are bad, one should remember that the educational institutions have cut them off from the life of reason so effectively that they cannot even articulate the causes of their legitimate unrest."[5] Newman, like Voegelin, saw the university as

4. "Richard Weaver against the Establishment," *Georgia Review*, 23 (Winter 1969), p. 451.

5. "On Classical Studies," p. 6.

a place where antagonistic ideas competed in the search for truth. American universities during the 1960s lurched violently between moral relativism and political dogmatism.

But, as Voegelin suggests, student criticisms often missed the real point. At many schools administrative planners sometimes seemed—in their desire to become "internationally recognized"—to have contrived to gut the undergraduate program. For example, at Michigan: "In 1968, 53 per cent of lower-division credit hours and 25 per cent of upper-division credit hours were taught by teaching fellows." Wisconsin, during the same period, had 1,600 teaching assistants. Thus, students who were going to "the best school in the state" would receive, in many cases, the preponderance of their education from underpaid, underprepared, and overworked graduate students. Berkeley, first in rankings of graduate programs and first in campus disorders, provided the model for disaster. During the period from 1953 to 1964 it increased its enrollment by 80 per cent but supplemented its faculty by only 18 per cent. Who taught the masses? The T. A.s of course. In Neil Smelser's words, "Students might well have perceived that they were being invited to an elite institution [which had raised its standards for undergraduate admission] only to be educated mainly by its second-class teachers in a large, impersonal setting." Universities today, as several writers in *Academic Transformation* note, become "known" almost exclusively because of their graduate programs. Therefore, we find the paradox which only recently scholars such as Peter Berger of Rutgers have pointed to: the most famous schools are often the poorest providers of an education.

RESEARCH expanded geometrically during the period; the national forests, David Riesman suggests, were endangered by the multitude of journal articles and books. And yet much of this research, especially in the social sciences, was suspect. Professors who dissented from the dominant environmentalism, or objected to radical tactics, were often harassed, their classes disrupted, their persons assaulted. Arthur Jensen of Berkeley, whose research on heredity and intelligence was anathema to the SDS, became a special target of that radical group. Richard Herrnstein, Harvard psychologist, who defended the validity of I. Q. tests, paid for his research by having his classes invaded by radical goon squads. Perhaps no aspect of these disgraceful episodes is more saddening than the failure of the embattled professors' colleagues to stand behind them. Marshall Meyer, writing about Herrnstein's travails at Harvard, notes that after the disruptions of the professor's classes "107 faculty members signed a petition condemning personal attacks on Herrnstein. (The fact that only 107 signed indicated that faculty sentiment was far from unanimous.)"

The Harvard student newspaper delivered this tinkling defense of aca-

demic freedom: " 'We uphold Herrnstein's right to publish his theory. . . . [But] Herrnstein's ideas also have potentially dangerous implications. . . . The threat of Herrnstein's ideas is more dangerous than the imagined [sic] threat of SDS . . . to intellectual freedom." That this type of intellectual thuggery prevails at America's most famous university is incredible. And yet many members of the professorial left still visualize themselves as academic Leonidases, guarding the pass of academic freedom against the imagined onrushes of the late Senator McCarthy. The colleagues of Jensen, Herrnstein, and others did not rush to defend their fellow teachers because they did not really believe in that academic freedom they jabber about so ceaselessly.

Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* outlined the pattern of rebellion we saw on our campuses in the 1960s. "Violent indignation with the past, abstract systems of renovation applied wholesale, a new doctrine drawn up in black and white for elaborating down to the very smallest details a rational society for the future—these are the ways of Jacobinism." Faculties at some schools were paradigmatically Jacobinical, reconstituting themselves as communes (Cornell) or collectives (Antioch); some schools attempted to commit their faculties and student bodies to particular political stands, such as the Harvard faculty with their vote against the Vietnam war. On the other hand, there were those who lacked all conviction. In such cases, faculties and administrations gave up all claim either to superior knowledge or authority. Many schools eliminated academic and social regulations almost as fast as the more politicized students could ask them to. In some cases, as at Livingstone College of Rutgers, Jacobinism blended with relativism. At Livingstone, as Richard P. McCormack describes it, "studies would be oriented toward problems rather than toward disciplines; students would have freedom to plan their own curricular and extracurricular lifestyles; . . . students would share fully with faculty in the direction of the college." Why students or their parents would care to pay great sums for such an academic goo is beyond the imagination.

SEVERAL OF the essayists in *Academic Transformation* (notably Philip G. Altbach in his view of Wisconsin, "The Champagne University in the Beer State") speak gloomily of declining legislative (i. e., financial) support for universities. Yet on the evidence of this book alone it is questionable whether the more ideologized schools merit public support. Schools which can neither provide the basis for academic order nor permit free discussion of controversial matters make poor supplicants at the public larder.

There are some critics of American education who might not be unhappy to see the liberal arts schools at our major universities strangle in their own vitriol. These people argue that American society can do without English majors and sociologists and that the needs of our society can be met

through the graduates of the professional schools where rioting and ceaseless dissent are relatively unknown.

And yet it is from the great humanists—the Ortegas, the Whiteheads, the Newmans, and the Arnolds—that we get our profoundest sense of what a university can and should be. What such an institution should *not* be is a dissemination center for liberal and radical propaganda. Of course, asking the university, the cornerstone of the American liberal establishment, to be less ideological, to consider both sides of important issues, to emphasize the mind over the feelings, is perhaps a little like asking a drunk to be sober. But a fiercely Calvinistic response to the academic "transformation" (read *disaster*) can lead only to despair. Even academics, we must believe, are capable of repentance.

However, it may be that our universities, if they are to survive, will have to make some important changes. I am not referring to the often trivial reforms (doing away with language requirements, building coed dorms) that only exacerbate problems. We should question the whole concept of a university "community" as it is perceived at present. Is it wise, for instance, to gather together tens of thousands of students and thousands of faculty members in a setting where they are cut off both from the restraints of the "host" community and from those of their home areas? Is not much of the heralded frustration, alienation, and deracination of the university a result of the unreality of packing 20,000 to 30,000 adolescents in a few hundred acres of space? As Blanch Blanke recently suggested in the *AAUP Bulletin*, we should probably have fewer young people in our colleges and more old people.[6]

In addition, we should study the procedures of those universities and colleges which survived the '60s with some measure of academic integrity. These schools appear to be of two main types: first, the Swarthmores and Wesleyans, which emphasized a strong commitment to undergraduate teaching and sought to retain a faculty who identified their own goals with those of the institution. Most faculty at Swarthmore, says Paul Manglesdorf, Jr., "have made their peace with the limited rates of change and the kind of change that the college can sustain." The second type is that represented by Princeton and MIT, where conservative forces insured some balance against faculty and student Jacobins. Of Princeton we read, "Despite the increased presence of the left on campus, the right is not dead. . . . The faculty has suffered virtually none of the McCarthyism of the left so painfully visited upon colleagues elsewhere." David Riesman's assessment of Princeton has implications even broader for American education than he appears to see.

6. "Degrees: Who Needs Them?" *AAUP Bulletin*, 58 (September 1972) pp. 261-265.

"It may possibly be of significance in understanding Princeton that there has been a well-organized and articulate conservative-libertarian group among the student body (as is also the case at the University of Toronto), whereas in most liberal colleges, including Harvard, the more moderate and conservative students have tended to be silent and withdraw. This has then had consequences for the range of opinions likely to be comfortably voiced among faculty and administration." To say the least! Marshall Meyer suggests, correctly from my experience, that when a university gains a reputation as a radical bastion, conservative students stop applying there. Radicalism thus begets more radicalism.

We must reject the curious view of political scientist Paul Sigmund that it might be better for universities to be monolithically liberal so as to resist the supposed "dangers of polarization."

If some of our supposedly better schools are to be something other than intellectual versions of cheering squads for left wing pieties, we must ask them to remember Newman's remark that "liberal knowledge and liberal pursuits are exercises of mind, of reason, of reflection." For living in the "everybody agrees" world of some schools does not prepare a student "for life"; it prepares him instead only to entertain an "up against the wall" mentality.

THE "everybody agrees" world hates a Herrnstein or a Jensen not so much for their (erroneously) supposed racism but rather because their antienvironmentalism threatens to rupture the whole tissue of illusion and supposition upon which so much of modern liberalism rests. The main threat to academic freedom comes from self-proclaimed bearers of the Light, who believe that universities "should commit [themselves] to specific political positions" (in the words of some Livingstone radicals). Universities must remember that the SDS manifesto was written at Port Huron, Michigan, not received on Mt. Sinai.

Moreover, if universities can have "quotas" for everything from Esquimaux to "Third World Lesbians," they can pay more recognition to the alternative position: conservatism; that is, they should recognize the other persuasion by some acts more concrete than by inviting William F. Buckley, Jr. to come once a decade and address the undergraduate forum.

Universities can become worthy of public support and confidence if they resist and, where necessary, turn back the excesses that characterized the decade described in *Academic Transformation*: indulgence of violence-prone radicals; unconcern for undergraduate education; hostility toward conservative or unorthodox thinkers. Rather than a "Network of Antiochs," the title of one essay in the collection, we need more schools where students will not only get their money's worth but, more importantly, their mind's worth.

Visions of Discontent

OUT OF DISCONTENT: VISIONS OF THE CONTEMPORARY UNIVERSITY, by Craig R. Eisendrath and Thomas J. Cottle. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1973. No price given.

Reviewed by **Allan C. Brownfeld**

TODAY'S UNIVERSITY is in serious trouble, the authors of this book declare, because more is demanded of it than universities used to believe lay within their province. Both Craig Eisendrath and Thomas J. Cottle bring to their study significant experience, as teachers and as students. Eisendrath, who received his doctoral degree from Harvard, has taught at Harvard, M.I.T., and Goddard College; at present he directs a "university without walls" program in the District of Columbia. Cottle, who received his doctorate from the University of Chicago, has taught at the University of Illinois and at M.I.T., where he is a member of the Education Research Center and a practicing psychotherapist.

More and more, these writers argue, young people take the rituals of family along with them; and for many the university has become an extension of the home. Although rearranged, the family needs are present. Young people continue the search for sibling community and parental relationships. They seek more from their teachers than proficiency in mathematics, Greek, or physics. The authors note that "students come to college seeking people, good people, not necessarily people who can teach them something. . . . What students wish primarily from professors is a witness and sanction of their efforts to achieve adulthood."

Modern American society has not prepared young people for the rigorous education that our leading universities once felt it their responsibility to provide. "Their home life and excessive exposure to the media have not adequately prepared them for objective study, sustained discipline, or the ability to maintain impersonal or task-oriented relationships," say Eisendrath and Cottle. Instead of arguing in favor of a return to a more stable family structure, and an elementary and secondary school system that *does* prepare young people for a university education, the authors instead assert: "Given this legacy, it is up to the elementary and secondary schools, and if these fail, to the universities to do the work necessary to create autonomous adults."

Young people demand that knowledge be "relevant." Therefore, Eisendrath and Cottle believe, this is the task to which the universities should be turned. They fail, however, to consider adequately the question of what

"relevance" means. They would have done well, for example, to ponder the commencement address given at Amherst College several years ago by Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, the distinguished black psychologist, who made an impassioned defense of what he termed "nonrelevant" education. Dr. Clark called on colleges to recognize the needs of those who did not seek immediate "relevance" in their studies—students whom he called "the forgotten men of the present ferment of campus confrontation."

"It is from these perverse lonely nonrelevant educated persons," Clark stated, "that a practical society receives antidotes to a terrifying sense of inner emptiness and despair. From these impracticals come our poets, our artists, our novelists, our satirists, our humorists, who, because of their perspective of education and their restless search for insights, continue to try to educate us. They make the life of the thinking human being more endurable and the thought of a future tolerable."

The authors of this volume tend to accept almost without question the need for immediate and practical "relevance" in the university curriculum. To today's young they write, "people matter . . . not just ideas, or at least not ideas which exist out of relation to the lives of people who hold them, or may need them. People are sacred, not knowledge, not careers, not money, and not any religion that substitutes a burdensome dogma for human pride, despair, and hope. It is a literal sort of humanism these young people bring to college, a humanism that continues to reject the objective, abstract, and intellectually depersonalized external world and seeks to substitute for it a network of living human relationships." In this idealization of the young, the authors follow the lead of Charles Reich. This passage, in fact, might have come directly from *The Greening of America.* To see only virtue in the young and primarily vice in those who are not young is, it seems rarely to be understood, a prejudice not dissimilar to that which we heartily condemn when applied to different races, religions, sexes, or ethnic groups.

THE AUTHORS do not present a single thesis, which indicates to the reader that separate parts of the book were written by the contributors with entirely separate goals. While the overall message is to reform our colleges and universities, make them "humane," "democratic," and "relevant," there are also sections which eloquently testify to the value of traditional education. The book notes, for example, that "the oldest and perhaps most honored governing notion of the university's job is to transmit Western civilization, an entity embodied or at least represented by its great books. . . . One thinks . . . of F. Scott Fitzgerald's admonition to his daughter that she should not skip too quickly over the poetry of Keats because there are so few real classics." According to this philosophy, "students should achieve some sense of the heights to which human endeavor can rise, ex-

perience firsthand the creative processes for themselves, and then know the collective achievement of their culture and their civilization . . . Time enough when one is out of school for the relevant and contemporary."

Despite such insights, elsewhere in this volume the authors recite the faddish clichés of those who believe that the concept of knowledge and truth is itself an enemy with which to do battle. They ask: ". . . can everyone honestly agree that in any field, even in the 'hard' sciences, there exists such a corpus of knowledge which one must learn to prove his competence? In our view, loading down the mind with excessive baggage . . . can be utterly destructive of creative thought. When knowledge becomes interesting to the student, even more, when it becomes fun and relevant to the work he alone and with others defines, it should be learned."

Who is to decide what it is that the student should learn in order to be an "educated" man? The authors are quite clear on this point: "What students actually do should ultimately be left to them."

What the authors argue for, in effect, is a giving in to the demands of students and turning the university into whatever those currently enrolled in it would like to make it. Discussing this thesis, Professor John W. Aldridge of the University of Michigan states that "one ought to be aware that the notion of educational self-determination is a perfectly logical outcome of a childhood experience in which few or no restrictions were placed on the child, and parents habitually made it a point, in moments of choice, to let the child cast the deciding vote . . . The vast majority are conditioned . . . to become capricious, self-indulgent, and drunk with the glory of their incontestable omnipotence. Thus, they enter the university convinced that whatever is required is wrong."

FOR MANY reasons, says Aldridge, the most obvious argument against the young determining the curriculum for themselves is rarely put forward, "that the young are not old enough to know what is relevant and what is not; that what may seem irrelevant at 20 may seem ferociously relevant at 40 and 50; that monotonous and routine learning may simply be good for one, good training for the mind, good training in the joys of work; or even that the question of relevance is itself irrelevant if one shares the view of most educators that all knowledge is relevant because all knowledge is related, in the sense that it is coherently formed out of the accumulated life experience of the race."

The authors note that following their view of education, "a student finishing four years of American history . . . might well know next to nothing about Martin Van Buren, Millard Fillmore, or even Franklin D. Roosevelt, a man whose policies and presence might have deeply affected the lives of several members of the student's seminar. But one may ask why a student should know about these Presidents unless he is really interested in them,

or knowledge of them is essential to his work." How students can tell whether or not they are interested in men and subjects about which they know nothing is not discussed. The authors, in advocating that the university be "democratic," that students determine requirements and other regulations, ignore the fact that a university is not a state—that while democracy may be valid for some purposes, it may be invalid for others.

They would do well to ponder the answer given by Professor William Letwin of the London School of Economics to the question, "Should a University Be Democratic?" He stated that "the premise of the students' case is that because democracy is good for some things, it is best for all things. The students maintain that, since a university is a community in which teachers and students cooperate to achieve a common goal, all the members of the university should, in accordance with the democratic ideal, join in determining the university's policies. This conclusion is manifestly absurd." It is absurd, states Professor Letwin, "in the first place because it ignores a difference between various sorts of groups. A family is a group; should it be governed democratically, on the principle of one man, one vote majority rule? Patients could dictate the medical policies of a hospital, and the guests in a hotel could determine its prices to suit their tastes . . . Clearly a university is more like a family than like a community of free adults. . . . In a university a number of immature persons (imperfectly educated persons called students) present themselves temporarily in order to acquire knowledge from the staff, who have knowledge. If a university did not rest on that basic inequality, it would not be a university . . . those who lack knowledge and have come to acquire it are not competent to judge what they need to learn, who best can teach it, and how the adequacy of their training is best tested. The only thing they are competent to judge is whether or not they are enjoying the business of learning, and that competence entitles them to exult or to grumble rather than to rule."

IF YOUNG people are not today being prepared for the demanding education which our best universities once provided the answer is not, as Eisendrath and Cottle proclaim, to change the universities and make them adapt to this poorly prepared generation. Instead, the answer is to prepare our young people for real learning, and leave those who are not able to pursue such a course of study to the junior colleges, trade and technical schools. Not everyone was meant to be a scholar, but that does not mean that scholars are not needed.

The authors complain of excellence as being "elitist," but that again is a cliché of the times. If we cannot all be heart surgeons, should we close the medical schools? That might please some radical theorists, but it would be turning our backs upon several thousand years of Western civilization. The authors may be prepared to do so. Most of us are not.

Is the American University Ruined?

THE FALL OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, by Adam Ulam. New York: Library Press, 1972. $7.95.
Reviewed by **Haven Bradford Gow**

ON ONE APRIL DAY in 1969, a group of student radicals entered University Hall of Harvard University and "invited" university officials to get out. Some of the officials, it seems, ignored the radicals and continued performing their duties; they were ejected by force. The administrators waited several tense hours before summoning the police, who upon their appearance cleared the scene, also by force. One Harvard professor, in discussing this event at a subsequent faculty meeting, compared it to the smashing of "a wonderful work of art." Although it is perhaps an exaggeration to describe the American university as "a work of art," one can sympathize with the professor's emotional anguish. The American university, after all, was meant to be a key institution in our culture, an institution not devoted to the use of force, but rather to the transmission of the immense cultural patrimony of the West.

Professor Ulam taught history and government during the tumultuous years at Harvard, and his experiences as a firsthand observer of academic anarchy at our nation's most prestigious university serve as a more than adequate basis for his reflections on the present state of American education. "There are many who believe that the crisis of the American university is over," he contends. Students—at least for the time being—have stopped rioting, universities have become "responsive" to community needs; all, it seems, is well again. But in fact it isn't so, for "the plight of American higher education is worse than it was three or four years ago, though certainly not as spectacular." True, we no longer have rioting, but "the politicization and bureaucratization of the American university have grown apace, with the corresponding shrinking of the university's proper function, that of teaching and research."

This is a pernicious development, declares the author, which, if unchecked, would lead not only to an educational but to a national disaster: "the erosion of the American university as a civilized and civilizing force." The reasons for this development, he contends, antedate Vietnam, and lie in "a number of basic misconceptions about what the university can or ought to be." Over the past two decades an alarming notion has gained much popularity, the belief that the university can and must instruct society on how to conduct its affairs, and that members of the university have a special responsibility to "prescribe cures for social ills" and propose "solu-

tions for foreign policy dilemmas." By attempting to fulfill this obligation "the university has increasingly surrendered its authority to do what it *should* do: to run its own affairs with minimum interference by governmental authorities at all levels, pressure groups of all kinds, and by trends and fashions of the moment."

The American university, it is indeed true, has been and continues to be seduced by pernicious "trends and fashions of the moment," and the blame for this lack of moral and intellectual courage on the part of students, faculty, and administrators cannot be put on the Vietnam War or racism. The university of old, Professor Ulam tells us, sought to arouse intellectual curiosity; knowledge and wisdom were its highest aims. But the "new" university has neglected the cultivation of right reason and the ethical basis of education, and thus has lost the power to arouse the moral imagination. What the new university has aroused is "concern" and social and political activism—not only off but also on the campus. The old university maintained that knowledge and wisdom are in themselves good; the new university argues that knowledge is good only insofar as it furnishes power to remake the world according to utopian design. Instead of helping us gain insights regarding the perennial problems of the human condition, the new university has aroused the frantic desire to remold through messianic politics the nature of man. Instead of helping students distinguish between things of permanent and transitory value, it has encouraged them to lust after passing social and intellectual fads, and all in the name of "relevance." And instead of cultivating moral and intellectual humility, the new university has encouraged moral and intellectual *hubris*.

IN THE name of "relevance" there has been a proliferation of such pseudo-scientific courses as "Group Dynamics," "Human Development," and "Sensitivity Training" and the expansion of "how to do it" courses—indeed, one university, Professor Ulam points out, has a Professor of Decision-Making! But even that "How to Make Decisions" course has much more merit than "learning how to make genuine duck calls," which, as one television news program recently informed us, is being offered as a course for credit at a Southern university. These courses—as one can imagine—merely serve to deflect higher learning from its primary focus, and feed "the dangerous illusion that its main purpose [is] *immediate* application to social and personal problems." Such courses also cultivate moral and intellectual arrogance. "An undergraduate might feel after emerging from a series of sociology and political science courses that he now is qualified as a social reformer and knows social truths inaccessible to the vulgar multitude," observes Professor Ulam. And from an array of courses on personality, sensitivity training, sex education, and small- and large-group psychology, students would often derive "equally superficial sophistication about the

springs of human behavior." It is a commonplace of higher education that one of its aims is to make the student question traditional beliefs, values, and practices. But, in truth, "what the student would get in exchange for the old beliefs would be what by now has achieved the status of traditional jargon." The student—after taking such courses—would end up confusing boredom and resentment with "alienation," and would be all too ready to identify irresolution and confusion about the meaning and purpose of life with the "identity crisis." The student's mind would not become freer, contends the author, "nor his critical capacity enriched but rather the place of old dogmas and beliefs would be taken by indoctrination with a mishmash of ritualistic phrases, clichés, and pseudoscientific concepts."

THE YOUNG, after all, are given to much brooding over their own psyche, over this or another inadequacy. But, asks the author: "Is it wise to encourage this concern and to elevate it into an academic discipline?" The traditional approach to learning has always insisted that education could help with "personal as well as social problems—but *not directly*." But, "the American university was already attuned to problem solving: it was in the classroom and the seminar that one was seeking and supposedly finding answers not only to what should be . . . the rate of economic growth in Pakistan, but also concerning one's personality development and psychological well-being."

With the demand for "relevance" came outcries for "open admissions," separate dormitories for blacks and whites, black studies programs, the abolition of required courses and grades, and, most importantly, the denigration of high academic standards for teachers as well as students. In all too many courses, "the participants decided their own grades, and their titular instructor was treated as and considered himself as . . . an 'educational resource' rather than authoritarian leader." To be sure, these courses enjoyed immense popularity—especially among those who see dances, sports events, and politics as the most important university activities. Increasing numbers of students became preoccupied with innovation for its own sake and with the study of events, slogans, and persons of transitory importance. Thus the study of such ancients as Homer, the Greek dramatists, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Shakespeare became "irrelevant." After all, why must one study the ancients when one could always study Cleaver, Hoffman, and the latest proposals for urban renewal? Lacking historical perspective and intellectual humility, student and faculty radicals failed to realize that as long as war, hatred, lust, greed, love, kindness, and envy continue to exist, such ancients as Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare will continue to retain "relevance."

Besides demanding "relevant" courses, student and faculty radicals contributed to the politicization of the university. The educational process is

and should after all be different from the political one; but many members of the academic community demanded and continue to demand even today that academic life become as politics or labor relations. "The art of negotiation and of compromise is a useful and necessary one in politics," Professor Ulam readily concedes. Through this process conflicts are often alleviated; however, "you cannot determine the validity of a mathematical or biological theory by taking a vote. . . . An institution which decides to establish a Department of Astrology certainly could not be called a university." In other words, "the university may not seek a compromise with, or grant concessions to, nonsense, no matter how popular." To do so would be to demoralize the genuine scholar; and just as demoralizing would be to allow sports, social activities, and politics to get in the way of the main purpose of the university.

THESE WERE self-evident truths to the university of old, but they were no longer so in the late 1960s. The university's function, it was held in certain circles, was to satisfy a wide variety of wants and needs: sometimes social and psychological, but most especially political. By trying to be reasonable about unreasonable and "nonnegotiable" demands the university encouraged those who would destroy not only the American university but our civil social order as well.

"It is the virtue of democracy," Professor Ulam writes, "that it is responsive to pressures and passions of the moment, that only its basic principles remain free from the passions of bargaining and compromise." This must not be so with education. For "it must adhere to basic rules which remain free from the excitements of a season, and which find their source in rational argument alone." We have seen in the past "what has happened to schools which have allowed extraneous considerations, no matter how tempting in their alleged solicitude for the general welfare, to affect their educational policies and processes." These schools, says Professor Ulam, have ended up becoming "seats of obscurantism, of political and philosophical partisanship rather than of learning, sources of national weakness and cultural and scientific backwardness rather than of strength." And unless the American university is restored to its proper functions, our investment in higher education will lead to the same tragic results.

Books of Interest

The Dragon Empress: The Life and Times of Tz'u-hsi, Empress Dowager of China, 1835-1908, by Marina Warner (Macmillan, 271 pp., $12.95). Nixon's "China Policy" has occasioned a spate of books about Chinese history. This is one of the more interesting to be published. Especially enlightening is the author's account of the disintegration of the Celestial Empire.

Africa: History of a Continent, by Basil Davidson (Macmillan, 320 pp., $12.95). The murky history of the Dark Continent is rendered intelligible in this panorama, newly revised and enlarged, with some excellent photographs by Werner Forman. Although one might wish to quibble with some of the author's judgments regarding contemporary African affairs, still his grasp of African history and culture is staggering.

The Lives of the Painters, by John Canaday (Norton, 4 vols., $24.95). The *New York Times'* art critic wrote in 1969 a most engaging and colorful series of thumbnail sketches that focus on the great figures in the history of Western painting. The biographies are crammed full of interesting details, and the critiques are succinct and masterful. The plates have been very intelligently selected to highlight the text.

Notes on Contributors

Dr. Stephen R. Maloney, of the University of Georgia, has been assistant editor of *The Georgia Review* for several years.

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Book Reviews

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