

view of the artist, it is the most generous system of patronage in the history of art. But there may be a flaw in this best of all worlds to date. Suppose the artist and his counterparts in other universities form associations after the pattern of learned societies of scholars and scientists, and in these societies they write, compose, and paint for each other rather than for a public. When this occurs, what has become of David's ideal of art as the heritage of "the entire people?" If this is indeed a problem, it is not limited to the arts. It is one that is shared with the entire university. If it is legitimate to ask who a poem is for, or a painting or a piece of music, it is equally legitimate to raise similar questions about the work done in the library or the laboratory. It would be less than a happy ending to the story of creative work in the arts on campus if the result were that art belongs primarily to those who create it and only in a secondary way to the rest of the population.

A somewhat different outcome is possible. Scholars and scientists in universities have argued powerfully that their work can be done most effectively in a protective environment with expensive resources and the safeguards of tenure. The result is a great deal of social and intellectual distance between universities and the public which supports them. We have had glimpses of the same kind of isolation developing in the arts. It may well be that the arts include a broader sense of the public than most other advanced studies, and this may be the reason for our feeling ill at ease when the life of the artist is more and more modeled on the life of the scholar or scientist. This feeling may lead to not only a re-evaluation of art in the university but also to a serious examination of the relation of the public to the whole enterprise of higher education. Such an outcome was certainly not in the minds of those who argued for the recognition of creative work sixty years ago at Iowa, but important changes nearly always have unanticipated consequences.

J. Richard Wilmeth

THE LIFE OF THE MIND

I was about to ask how would we know if a university were fostering and furthering the life of the mind, but I see that it would be better to ask whether or not the university fostered and furthered my life of the mind. You will forgive the presumption, but all of us have a life of the

mind probably for the reason that I have—that a university confirmed me in it and led me to lead it. In my case, *this* university.

My association with the University of Iowa goes back 44 years. In recalling this I realize that I am familiar with the university both as a student and a teacher, and familiar with it at different times—both before and after World War II, and during and after the active phase of the counterculture. This is a way of saying that I knew the university when it was small and when it became large, knew it as it functioned collegially in pre-War America and as an institution, a multiversity, of the postwar American revolution. If only in respect to size, I might borrow Kerouac's refrain, *it all goes back*, because much that makes Iowa distinctive does go back: to what was small and coherent and self-directed, to what in many ways was a *polis*. I say *polis* here because those who comprised it knew that likening Iowa City to Athens (they were then comparable in size) was not solely due to the fact that the creative arts flourished here or to the presence of New Humanists, Norman Foerster, Rene Wellek, Austin Warren, Joseph Baker and Curt Zimansky, among others. It all goes back to traditions fostered then—and undoubtedly earlier—traditions that were strong enough, so vitally necessary to the life of this university, that they survived all change.

I am speaking here of something elusive, of tradition, but in none of its restrictive senses; rather as the spirit of the place. I have felt elsewhere the sustenance of such a spirit, as if all the great activity of a university, past and present, were an enabling atmosphere. This spirit cannot be evoked for the asking. It is rare, and universities that have acquired it should cherish and maintain it.

Even when the university was small, coherent, and collegial (from *collegium*, society, community) it was open rather than closed to many doctrines, sharing only a serious commitment to ideas of present and vital concern. The university was devoted to the life of the mind because the life of the mind mattered, was essential in the present climate of opinion. The movements with which the university was involved at this time were current, and members of the university actively led them. Consider only those I was acquainted with: the New Humanism and the New Criticism, logical positivism, Mabie's theatre, the academic acceptance of the creative arts. These movements, needless to say, were not doctrinally congenial. How could New Humanists and New Critics live with logical positivists, even with a theatre whose vigor, in part, was the result of the Federal Theatre which Mabie had helped initiate? How

was it that followers of Irving Babbitt, whose *On Being Creative* is sarcastically titled, pressed for the creative arts, so much so that Iowa might have been mistaken for Black Mt. College? But enough of paradoxes: the life of the mind is full of them.

What I find of value here besides the evidence of vitality are the following: 1) That the university was hospitable to intellectual diversity and to those, teachers and students alike, beyond the pale. Who can measure the incalculable importance to this university of its welcome response to emigres from Europe in the 1930s; or of the low tuition rate that by attracting indigent students from distant towns and cities made Iowa cosmopolitan? 2) That even then universities were becoming *the* place of intellectual life in America. The historical importance of the New Humanism and New Criticism—or the importance they still have for us—resides in the fact that both were responses to a deeply-felt crisis of civilization. Failing to succeed in the political arena, they made their home in the university, succeeding there nobly (by their lights) by changing the curriculum and the sensibilities of generations of students. Considered in this context, literature—synonymous with *ideas* and the *life of the mind*—was indeed serious, a matter of survival, of life and death. Even the advocacy of the creative arts seems to me to have been a prescient recognition of the most notable aspect of American intellectual life since 1950—that it has increasingly found its place and its support in universities. Moreover, that Iowa fostered the creative arts as perhaps no other university had is not adventitious. It rested on the fact that Iowa provided—I think still provides—the necessary critical situation. The arts do not flourish without the life of the mind.

The phrase conjoins two heavily invested words, suggesting that mind has a life of its own, that mind exists as a vital activity. From this we may deduce that there is no mind without activity, that to think is to act, and that we are scholars, so to speak, only when we are thinking. In light of the division of labor, Emerson recognized that thinking might become a special kind of activity, and lest this happen he assigned the scholar the heroic task of thinking wholly for the whole society—that is, of bringing to bear on matters important to the commonwealth the whole soul in activity. This reminds us that *mind* involves more than intellect, that its essence is *life*, the impulsive, ever-generative, boundary-breaking force depicted in Emerson's essay on "Circles."

To turn to another idea evoked by *life* and *mind*, Emerson does not consider a life devoted to mind, the *vita contemplativa*, anything but

preparatory. Expression, he said, is the other half of a man or woman; influx demands efflux. We do indeed entertain ideas, but that is not the end of it. American philosophy from Emerson to our time insists on the instrumental value of ideas, and American philosophy values mind because its activity is socially-redemptive. In America, we think, as the saying goes, to a purpose.

Now, isn't it notorious that intellectuals in America (the scholar, in Emerson's definition, is an intellectual) for the most part speak ill of universities? They would have us believe that universities are inimical to the life of the mind. Of course, the life of the mind doesn't have a necessary connection with a university, though the university has a necessary connection with the life of the mind. We can carry on this activity elsewhere: in a hut beside a pond, in the attic of a house, in a monastery, in an institute. It may no longer be possible to do so while riding the subway or walking the street. Isn't the ideal image of this activity the academy, Socrates in discussion with his friends; conversation, which Bronson Alcott (Emerson's Plato) said was heaven? This is not hyperbole but merely a way of telling us (in America) how precious the life of the mind is, what a veritable life it is.

The life of the mind, as we all know, is solitary. There is something very private about thinking. Yet the mind may be most alive when, in dialogue, its activity is manifest. We perhaps forget that thinking-as-speech is performative, another vital activity requiring response and reciprocity, feeding others as it itself is fed. In this sense, the university as *polis* is necessary to the life of the mind. Over and above its resources, it provides the space, and place, ever rarer in America, for this activity. When fulfilling its function, the university is a classroom to which each of us brings a private self, to publish it there and make it public; there to nurture ourselves on the endless generativity of books, in this way keeping alive the life of the mind and, with it, the collective consciousness of all high human achievement that the university offers us in its libraries and museums. Though we can no longer always read this from the physical plant, the university, essentially, is a form for the life of the mind.

In saying this, haven't I defined the vocation of the humanities? Aren't the humanities wholly concerned, where other disciplines are not, with the intrinsic value of the life of the mind, with affording the *play* of ideas we sometimes call "a critical situation?" Isn't this why, in universities where the humanities are primary and prominent, the other disciplines are liberalized?

I find on consulting Webster's dictionary that the word *humanities* is the plural of *humanity* and may mean either "human attributes or qualities," as when Melville says that Ahab had his humanities, or "the branches of learning having primarily a cultural character." The word belongs to what Kenneth Burke would call the *human* cluster: it is imbedded in a list of words all having *human* for their initial syllables. The list isn't very long, perhaps a sixth of the page, but it is prefaced by *hum*, which reminds me of our first utterance, and closed off by *humate*, which is associated with *humus* and may properly *humble* us. *Human* itself merits reconsideration because its root is *man*.

This brings us back to the most familiar definition of the humanities—"the branches of learning having primarily a cultural character"—and puts *cultural* under suspicion. Curricularly speaking, the humanities equate with the liberal arts. The *liberal* cluster, incidentally, is more extensive than the human cluster, and richer, too, running into *libido* and *library*, a familiar conjunctin to those who visit the latter at night. The *liberal arts*, in turn, equate with *useless*, in the sense that those pursuing them are said to be not gainfully employed. And isn't this what we mean by *cultural*, something decorative, a fringe benefit? It doesn't surprise me that an American dictionary uses *cultural* in this absent-minded way, but then this is what a nation of cultivators thought, having forgotten that the root of all culture is the cultivation of the soil, and culture loses its vitality when, by metaphorical extension, it is reduced to the cultivation of ladies and gentlemen. Had the dictionary capitalized the word and said, see *Kultur*, it wouldn't have surprised me either, since *Culture* in this sense is the reified body of reified ideas—the big abstractions that, as Ortega knew, had been divorced from the life we live; those "two gross of broken statues,/ . . . [the] few thousand battered books" that Pound felt had been the occasion of the first World War and failed to compensate for it. Finally, the dictionary speaks of *branches of learning* as if any genuine culture, any humanities worth having, weren't also root and trunk.

But are the humanities root and trunk? And does a university that has its humanities—and proudly so—sufficiently foster and further the life of the mind? I know I insist, perhaps to weariness, on the life of the mind. I do so because mindlessness is to our time what Emerson thought moral cowardice was to his. I do not know why a post-industrial society must necessarily be post-literate, nor why leisure, the most important requisite of the life of the mind, is with increasing frequency no longer put to that use.

Merely to note, the institutionalization of intellectual life and the embourgeoisement of intellectuals is to suggest the dangers of our own time. This puts a university that respects the life of the mind under the obligation to keep every aspect of intellectual life open and free and, hardly less important, to provide the most favorable conditions, of time, space, resources, for its pursuit. And in doing this, it should remember what I have not yet mentioned about the fostering of my life of the mind: that though the mind is wonderfully generative and the energy of ideas forever renewable, the transfer of energy, in universities as in life, is generational. I will not name them here though if I did it would be after Buber's fashion when he acknowledged Dilthey as "*my teacher*"—I will not name them now, but it is only because of the generative example of great teachers—teachers who had a vocation, teachers who had and shared the life of the mind—that I am standing here.

Sherman Paul

A FOOTNOTE

When great teachers—challenging teachers—are discussed, it is like a group of stone age hunters sitting around a fire describing an animal they had glimpsed at various times and under different circumstances.

Allan D. Vestal

THE HUMANITIES AND THE PROFESSIONS: THE RISE OF BIOETHICS

I have used the term "bioethics" in my title. It is not as familiar a term as "medical ethics," but it has become current as rapid developments in the biological sciences, genetics for example, have raised new ethical questions both for researchers and medical practitioners.

It would be comforting to report that this renewed interest in ethics grew up in the great university centers of study in the humanities, but I cannot. Rather the Nuremberg trials and the code of ethics for medical experiments that they produced, began a development which accelerated in the 1960s with much publicized advances in medical technology and biological research. I need only mention the appearance of dialysis and