

Discussion

Souls Without Longing

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“There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.”

Thoreau

Allan Bloom's *The Closing Of The American Mind* is as easy to read as it is difficult to understand. Both make it attractive. It is a pleasure to read. It crackles with witty remarks, some ridiculing, usually justly, most disturbing, and a few excruciating. No page is without something to think about. The most provoking is the discovery that many young people today no longer say “I love you” and, if they do, no longer desire their love to last. Eternity has disappeared for them. They “love” by contract and accident. The loss of eternity troubled Nietzsche to the depths of his soul; many of Bloom's students find it unintelligible.

Bloom's book abounds with similar discoveries; it not only disturbs and pleases on first reading, but promises to do so even more on later reading; as you read, you know you are going to reread it soon; it is sure to give even more of its gifts then. Not that it does not start giving them on first reading. The man has so much to say that he is often breathless. His allegro is infectious, and also instructive. The book is not only about the mind, it shows you a mind at work; it is not only about the soul, it shows you a soul that knows longing; it is not only about the University, but shows you one of the things a teacher there should be.

Bloom's book has three parts; it deals with students, with teachers, and with the University, in that order. The students, drugged with rock music and drugs, study nothing with longing; the teachers, German-taught relativists, teach the truth “there is no truth”; and the University, governed by weak adults, panders to student appetites and acquiesces to the loudest outside wills. How these three parts go together and why they are treated in the order they are is not at all clear, certainly not on first reading. What is, nonetheless, clear is that the book is remarkable.

First, the success of his description of the souls of his students. Bloom describes the souls of the young so vividly and in such detail that the parents bought the book and made it a best-seller. Although this success in turn alarmed the academics, still none of their hostile reviews questioned his portrait, especially some who celebrated as virtues what Bloom nailed as vices. Thus his success with the parents stands as strong evidence of the truth of his

portrait of the students. To have described children to their own parents, so that they buy the book to understand them, is remarkable evidence of Bloom's powers of perception.

The second remarkable thing about Bloom's book, something he claims to discover, is that the thoughts, indeed the very idioms, in which our students misunderstand themselves, such as "values," "lifestyle," and "self," turn out to have a connection to German philosophy. The connection is twofold and contrary. On the one hand, the pale language in which these damaged souls understand the soul is a dilution of Nietzsche, in part through his philosophic student Heidegger, and even more so through a host of academic social scientists and psychoanalysts. Yet, on the other hand, the best description of these deformed souls is Nietzsche's description of the Last Man. Through his diluters, Nietzsche contributed to their making, yet long before they existed, he described them better than any one since, or before.

And the third remarkable thing about the book, another of Bloom's discoveries, is that the universities through which the German thinkers were so deleteriously connected to American students should have taken a path so similar to the one elected by the German nation in 1933, partly guided by the new thinking of the new Rector of Freiburg University, Martin Heidegger. What happened so dramatically at Cornell in 1969, and since then happens routinely at the University, turns out to have been analogous to what happened in Germany in 1933; in both cases the will replaced reason as the principle governing the University and in Germany governing the nation as well.

Are Bloom's discoveries genuine? Is it true that German thought has contributed to the corruption of America? Short of a very thorough examination of his arguments and the matter itself, one cannot say for sure. Is it true that the violent takeover of Cornell in 1969 is analogous to the violent takeover of Freiburg and other German universities in 1933? Did America defeat Hitler only to see his thoughts defeat us by taking over our universities and our children? Again the matter requires inquiry. However, here again the success of Bloom's description of the young with their parents constitutes strong secondary evidence for his case. Any man who can describe manners, morals, and minds so accurately might well be right on their intellectual genealogy and right on the agents and institutions by which they have been malformed. Bloom's single recommendation, let the students read some great books, is also powerfully supported by his own success. Apparently the reading of four or five great books, such as Bloom himself has read and taught, can help a man see things far better than most of us. Let us examine each of his discoveries more closely.

I. THE PARENTS AND THE STUDENTS

Most readers of Bloom's book seem to have been gripped by Part One; the same readers seem to find Part Two hard going; I suspect few purchasers get

through Part Two and fewer still stay on through to Part Three; some few probably skip Two and read Three. Reading the first part, many parents must have felt that Mr. Bloom is right. They sense that something is wrong with our universities, such that they may ask themselves, "Why pay so much money to send our children to such a place?" And may one day ask, "why pay money at all?" They must have been pleased that a professor from a prestigious university says things that agree with their parsimonious alarm. Yet that cannot account for the popularity of the book. Its first part treats the University only secondarily; primarily it treats the young, their souls, their homes, and their future. It is not, however, addressed to them; although it might benefit many of them, few students have read it. Instead, the book is addressed to their parents. It is a kind of report card to parents of the nation. It is not, however, about their sons' and daughters' competence, their skills, or their achievements, or the lacks thereof; it is about their souls, about what they feel, what they like, and about what they love, if anything. Reading it, many parents recognize their children and feel, "This Bloom fellow really understands my son." Many must feel grateful. Some may even feel they never knew their children 'til now. Others may feel Bloom is giving their children a well-deserved spanking. Many told their friends, "Read the book."

What else can explain the sales? Most best-sellers satisfy the public interest in astrology, diet, pornography, and crime; the story of how a fat feminist detective listened to the stars, got beautiful, in flesh-tone detail, and single-handedly destroyed male agents of a foreign power, in bloody detail, and rescued America, all in asphalt prose, would be a sure hit. Mr. Bloom's is none of these. However, the success of a well-written book on a serious subject is not as remarkable as something else. Although free will means every child is eventually responsible for his or her own deeds, the younger they are, the more the parents are responsible. Good children are a credit to themselves and also a credit to their parents, while bad children are first a discredit to their parents and second also to themselves. Despite the fact that Mr. Bloom describes children who are the most potent criticism of their parents that there could be, wonder of wonders, the parents read Bloom with excitement, approval, and gratitude.

For years the American public has heard criticism of higher education in America, especially of the high school.¹ Without in the least disagreeing with such criticism, Mr. Bloom eschews it; he says almost nothing about the high school. He knows it is not the fundamental problem. The home is. Criticizing the high school to parents, however justly, will not encourage them to do something about the home. The students Mr. Bloom describes are what they are not because of the American high school but because of the American home. These students have never lived in a home. Even if their parents have stuck together, what has stuck them together, comfort, contract, and pleasure, has not provided a home for their offspring. Mr. Bloom says, and he is right,

that what makes a home is reverence for something greater than yourselves, which then governs your lives, by command, sacrifice, and love. These students, who have grown up in lavish comfort, fearless wealth, and abundant attention, are nonetheless orphans, homeless and not likely to establish homes themselves.

Mr. Bloom's description of the souls of his students is not only a criticism of the homes they come from and hence of the parents so avidly reading his book, it is a criticism of the parents themselves. After many realize Bloom understands their children, some few must acknowledge their responsibility, "Yes, we recognize these flat-souled teenagers, we have met them, we do not like them, and alas we have raised them in our homes." And a very few may go further, "We have met them they are us." Indeed, the "nice," listless, empty students whom these readers deplore are often a sulking, barely-talking expression of their parents' own empty souls.

One wonders whether one should praise the parents for welcoming this criticism or marvel at how much they can ignore it. Although they are primarily responsible for these children, for the listless, fearful, emptiness of their souls, these parents buy the book and tell other parents to. A penetrating cynic contemplating the success of the book might say, "So the Last Man reads." I suppose one will have to wait and see what they do. Will the parents buying Mr. Bloom's book heed the practical steps it urges: forbid rock music, banish television, and get off all pills? Mr. Bloom recommends these steps with consummate teacherly skill, simply by describing how each of these evils destroys the soul. A parent moved by his description, enough to say "no" to them, must, Bloom trusts, be moved to say "no" to them in their own life, and will soon find that one must say "yes" to their opposites: music, reverence, and virtue.

Bloom mentions some of these causes of the destruction of the family, and alludes to others; those he may seem to slight, he really has not. Study the book, think about what Bloom highlights, and you will be led to what he leaves in the shadows. He who strikes so regularly at the root must know what the branches are. And he who strikes at the root teaches well, by leaving the discovery of the branches to his pupils, as they will more readily do if they have the happiness of thinking they did it on their own.

Mr. Bloom's description of the young is designed to encourage the parents to re-establish the home. The power of his argument is exerted through implication. By showing detailed pictures of their homeless children, Bloom encourages the parents to make the home once again a place to grow up straight in, to learn important things in, to look up to someone. Thus he bids the parents become once again the first and most enduring teachers. Good homes make good schools, more than vice versa, and good schools make a good nation, more than vice versa. Thus, a few discerning patriotic souls, reading the book, will also say, "He really understands America."

One hopes this book will be read by the Statesmen, too. It is harder now to found a family and provide the good things it and almost it alone can provide for its members, and thus for the country, than it was at any time before 1950. Since World War II, America has enjoyed a steady increase in wealth, enormous in its total, yet a young family looking for a house today faces a much harder market situation than in 1950. Since World War II almost every piece of legislation affecting the American family has affected it adversely. The steady decline in the income tax allowance for a family since 1950 is the most obvious example.

These economic and legislative obstacles to the family are consequences of thought. In a democracy, customs change soon after thoughts, and laws follow soon after customs. Since 1950 wave on wave of criticism of the family has violated the home, battered the wife, contemned the father, abused the children, and broken up the family. Children have not benefitted. Criticize the family, dream of replacing it, hinder it, vilify mothers, ridicule fathers, and weaken parental authority, and you will harm children. Harm children and you will raise up the selfish, cautious, listless souls Bloom describes, none of whom are ready to become fathers and mothers, and none of whom are ready to study important matters with passion.

The generation beginning to enter college in the next few years is likely to be more, not less, listless. Born in the early seventies, more and more of them will have grown up knowing that their own parents chose to destroy beings who were exactly like themselves at one vital, indispensable, unskippable stage, and but for that parental choice, their living brothers or sisters, to share chores with, to tickle, and to talk with for the rest of their lives. As youngsters these students will have heard the reasons given, observed human nature in their parents, wondered whether other reasons might have had something to do with such choices, and asked themselves whether their parents could be counted on in a pinch. One day a few of these children may sue their parents for their lost siblings. Others may feel guilty for being "the one who survived." None will think back to the day of their birth with untroubled gratitude.

As Bloom's portrait of the American child shows, over the last forty years the American home has become an orphanage, to the point that many now advocate government day care. What Socrates thought no parents would ever willingly agree to, giving up their children to others at age ten, may very soon become enlightened opinion. Mothers who choose to stay at home and raise their children will soon be vilified, as they are now penalized through the tax code, their family's taxes going to a family that chooses to send their children to day care in order to get a second income. From State-headed families it is a short step to eugenic control. What Hitler only dreamed of, Socrates proposed with massive irony, and Goethe laughed at, the replacement of man and wife with scientist and glass dish, will soon be possible, then advocated, finally enforced. The homeless children that emerge from future state orphanages will

not be better students, more vivacious, more ardent, more adventurous, than those who today must struggle with a past of home neglect and day care just to be cheerful.

At the other end of life “well-intentioned” legislation, such as comprehensive health care for the aged, has also made the family harder to exist. Not only has it opened a Pandora’s box of expenses, by paying for care that merely stretches out death, it has meant that children do not grow up expecting to care for their parents in their old age. Here again, the condition of the children is the consequence of their parents’ decision. It was the generation of the parents who voted themselves this care, as they did the equally enormous increase in social security payments, all to be paid for by future generations, their children and their children’s children. More recently, the same motive has led to the idea that children should pay for their own college education throughout their lives. What was once saved for by the parents and given with love (and supervision) to their children is no longer. The generations are becoming disconnected. Acquiescence in the fear of death, the passion at the root of the conquest of nature, turns everyone into an individual: weak, lonely, and desperate, and thereby destroys every community, including the primary community, the family. The “death of God” that Nietzsche named as the greatest event in the West these last hundred years will soon lead, not to the Surpassing Family, but to the Last Family. “We have invented happiness,” say the parents, bring out the fast food, and turn on the TV. “We are depressed,” say the children, get in a car, snort something, turn on the rock music, and speed away.²

Mr. Bloom’s one recommendation to fellow teachers, let the students read some great books, will do much to improve their souls and thus the public life of the nation, but, since his description of the students is accurate, something else is needed as well. Such virtual orphans need a year, perhaps two, of good, orderly, beautiful experiences, before they get to the great experiences the great books offer. As Plato’s *Republic*, the book Bloom tells us he has learned the most from, says, gymnastic, music, and poetry come before dialectic, good habits before adventurous philosophy. Young souls need to see the beautiful, conform to the orderly, and partake in the good before they set out to discover the true. Students who have never been read aloud to, never danced gracefully, never dressed neatly, and never sung happily, are seldom ready for pure reason alone. Learning is first in the senses and in the imagination before it is in the intellect; students without the family life that feeds the senses, regulates the habits, and excites the imagination need a catchup course, much like the one Telemachus, who grew up with over a hundred lounge-lizards in his home, got when he visited some other homes. I would, then, have them read the *Odyssey*, *Huck Finn*, and *Hamlet*, all about orphans and, of course, much more, in Plutarch, Shakespeare, and Willa Cather, for example. I would have them read, as John Senior says, “a thousand good books before they read a hundred great ones.”³

II. THE SOUL, STUNTED, HINDERED, AND ENRAGED, BEFORE CLASS

One might begin to understand both the popularity and the teaching of Mr. Allan Bloom's book *The Closing of the American Mind* by noticing that it is one of the very few books since World War II, either popular or academic, to speak of the soul. "Souls Without Longing" is said to have been the author's preference for a title. Mr. Bloom speaks of the soul not as something doubtful, or shameful, or a distant object of study, but as something self-evident, desiring, hearty, and yet also mysterious. To Mr. Bloom the soul is evident in the desires of the freshman, come to college, as he once did, to discover what life is about, to discover who one is meant to be, and what high, adventurous path one should choose to it.

No real teacher can doubt that his task is to assist his pupil to fulfill human nature against all the deforming forces of convention and prejudice. The vision of what that nature is may be clouded, the teacher may be more or less limited, but his activity is solicited by something beyond him that at the same time provides him with a standard for judging his students' capacity and achievement. There is no real teacher who in practice does not believe in the existence of the soul, or in the magic that acts on it through speech. . . . Fascination with one's students leads to an awareness of the various kinds of soul and their various capacities for truth and error as well as learning. Such experience is a condition of investigating *the* question: "What is man?," in relation to his highest aspirations as opposed to his low and common needs. A liberal education means precisely helping students to pose this question to themselves, to become aware that the answer is neither obvious nor simply unavailable, that there is no serious life in which this question is not a continuous concern. (Pp. 20–21)

In most freshmen this question is soon extinguished; by the middle of sophomore year answers have been provided; a major in one of the specializations that constitute the chaos of the present University curriculum has been selected, a path of ambition and comfort plotted, and a record begun to be accumulated. The life of the mind, if it still exists, lives in guilt, in doubts about one's major, in comparisons between freshman year and now, in memories of questions that have not been answered, and vows to get back to them someday. All this will happen unless one either, while choosing a major (a niche), continues to inquire about the most important questions, or has the good fortune to meet up with a teacher, such as Allan Bloom, teaching something great.

Among the great books one might teach, Mr. Bloom concentrates on those that teach the most about the soul, the city, and about teaching: Socrates, Rousseau, and Nietzsche. As Bloom has come to know it, in Plato, in himself, and in his students, the soul longs to know. The soul wants to learn, can teach itself, and is grateful for what ever assists it learning: things, itself, or a teacher. The soul can teach others, and teaching others, it may teach itself.

Delighting in their longing, it may satisfy its own. Souls filled with longing in a classroom led by a soul filled with longer longing, longing become a way of life, is the measure.

Thus in Part One, it is from the point of view of a teacher that Mr. Bloom describes what makes the souls of students at the present time so flat; thus in Part Two it is as a teacher that he appreciates how the noble thoughts of teacher Nietzsche have been blurred by lesser students, such as Weber, made crude by poor students, such as Freud, made dangerously resolute by deep students like Heidegger, and latterly traduced by wanton students, such as Derrida. Finally, in Part Three, it is as a teacher that Mr. Bloom accuses the universities of abandoning reason itself. What did Cornell teach everyone watching when it capitulated to the threats of injury and of murder made by students bearing arms? The University that abandons reason and now even attacks it will necessarily fail democracy and impoverish the souls of students. Throughout the book the standard, judging students, teachers, philosophers, and institutions alike, is whether they hinder or encourage the soul that longs.

Thus, in the first part, affirmative action is wrong because it hinders any human being partly so selected from undertaking an inquiry guided by the truth. Consider what affirmative action would do in a classroom to truth. Should the affirmatively-acted-upon students in a class get extra points on each assignment? Should their comments in a class be considered better than they are because they made them? Should they be graded only against the background of their race? Should an 82 on a final exam mean a C if you are one race, an A if you are another, and a B if you are a third? Would this be honest to the student? Would it be just to others? And how would a teacher enforce it? For a starter, how would the teacher decide who belongs to what race, or to what degree? That affirmative action requires racial courts shows how far America has moved since the days it fought Hitler.

It is easy to see how, as Mr. Bloom maintains, affirmative action has corrupted the classroom. At its best it could have meant that the universities sought out students high on desire but short on skills. Had the universities found such students, built academies near their campuses for them, and sent their own teachers to bring them up to their entrance levels, some good might have come from affirmative action, and no harm to the University. As it was, it lowered standards not only for those admitted under such programs, but for all students. Faced with the dilemmas I have sketched above, most teachers just lowered standards for every student; both weariness and justice seemed to agree it was the best course. As a consequence the best students, the ones with the most longing, missed the challenges they need to go as far as their souls might take them. It is very hard to challenge such students, ask them to bear all burdens, pay all prices, when the majority won't bear any burdens or even pay the old price of admission.

Nor is affirmative action good for the persons selected for favorable treat-

ment. Perhaps they seem helped, for a time, but only towards wealth and position, and then not for long. Even if they reach the goal, it will not please them long. Human beings are far more hurt by insults than injuries. Insofar as the recipients of affirmative action have self-respect, they must wonder whether they have been preferred because of something extrinsic. They must wonder whether they deserve what they have. And those few who do not care whether they respect themselves do not go untouched by this evil, for “affirmative action” encourages the spirit of resentment in all who gain or hope to gain by it. It encourages a man or a woman to hang on to old grievances, to nurse them, to inflate small ones, to broadcast large ones for effect, claim historical ones one did not suffer from oneself, and generally go about turning griefs into grievances. It may even tempt some to invent imaginary hurts. Certainly it sets its recipients looking for fresh hurts. Or new majors, any of the various forms of Victim Studies now offered. Affirmative action does not help its recipients to affirm themselves, or encourage them to improve themselves. And none of this promotes serenity in solitude, study in the library, friendship in the classroom, or civility on campus.

Feminism does the same, says Mr. Bloom. Just as the racism in “affirmative action” denies the natural humanity of all human beings, regardless of skin color, and hence denies their equal political rights, especially the fundamental opportunity to pursue happiness, so feminism denies the natural differences between the sexes, or refuses to recognize their degree, as if the difference between male and female were like the difference between bald and hairy. The denial of nature in both makes inquiry into nature, recognition of the natural order of rank, and the self-discipline required for long study, hard to muster. Why work hard to understand the solar system, life, yourself, and the ordered whole when stressing your sex or the color of your skin will get you good grades, entrance into medical school, advancement, position and wealth. So affirmative action promises, so feminism promises, and may in some degree deliver, but neither can deliver happiness. Neither movement knows what would give its participants happiness. Does either have a goal beyond staying sore? At work in affirmative action and in feminism is the spirit of revenge, which Nietzsche called the most ignoble and destructive passion of man. Although it claims its ingratitude to life is justice, even it never calls itself happy. The joyless complaint “I get no joy” cannot bring joy.⁴

Feminism, insofar as it does advocate a way of life, recognizes purposes, and proposes customs, measures, and laws, also impedes the soul in longing. It does so by discouraging courtship. Feminism tells young women they should trace most of their human suffering, frustration, and vexation to men. The young man with a bouquet of flowers, the husband sweating for the family, the kind grandfather, are denied, or despised. The more they seem good, the more they must be evil. Fortunately, young women are of two minds about feminism. They want a career and they want a family. Fortunately and unfor-

tunately. Feminism may say OK to these two big desires, but does not tell young women how hard it will be. Is it a marriage if you live in two cities? Do you know where your husband is tonight? Even in one city, can you lead two lives? Are you one of those rare human beings who gets along on four hours sleep? Finally, will you be happy to hear your child at day care say, "Mommy" to the replacement they just hired and not to you?

Feminism is among the ideas that has swept courtship from the campus, and that in turn makes students less studious. It is not only that the pill makes sexual relations less serious, less adventurous (as Bloom emphasizes, too much), but that it sweeps away the long view from campus. These students couple by accident and contract. They have solved the human problem of jealousy by not caring very much. What intensity, attention, and concentration there is is at the level of sports. You wouldn't care if some one played tennis with some one else tomorrow, why care if they . . . Banish the long view and you dishearten the short as well.

What was courtship? Because it looked to the serious united purposes of the family, especially the raising and educating of children, it was a serious thing. That seriousness even preceded it. Before a couple started courting, they spent time with many "beaus" or "dates." The casual linkings and light flirtations of dances and other social gatherings, usually chaperoned, were less risky but not unserious. Looking ahead to marriage, the young judged each other by small things, morals by manners, character by courtesy, stability in life by the stability of a glass in the hand. Meanwhile, young people had fun together, as they seem never to now. What was courtship? Those who do not know may ask their grandparents or read *The Virginian*.

The secret of courtship is the secret of life; "To be happy, you must live a fulfilled life with unfulfilled desires" (Bonhoeffer). And thus it is the secret of study. Bloom's students do not long for answers to the great questions, find it hard to read books by those who long their whole life, and do not court each other, because they cannot bear having desires that will not be immediately fulfilled. So they have only ones that can be. As all the great souls, especially Socrates and Shakespeare, know, sex and longing are connected. Those who have given up looking to marriage as a fulfillment of their unfulfilled sexual desires are very unlikely to have any ardor for the study of questions that have no short answers. The best indication of how you will do in college is still whether you took a foreign language far enough to read it with pleasure. The best moral indication of readiness for study in young persons is whether they look upon a member of the opposite sex as a potential partner in pleasures and duties that are enduring. "Marriage is a long conversation," said Nietzsche. Students who don't court with that conversation in mind will have very little worth saying to each other, in class and out now, to the world later, and to themselves forever.

Thinking of souls he has met in a classroom, Mr. Bloom reaches back into

their life before they came to college to understand why they are so unprepared for its high adventures. The scattering of the family and the weakening of the reverence that used to be its center make for other more fundamental difficulties. The absence of strong, enduring affection in the family makes it hard to love anything very much later on. People who find it hard to love their parents will find it very hard to love others later, including themselves. Students who were not asked to obey their parents will find it hard to obey others later; they will not be able to accept orders or obey their own orders. And the absence of reverence in the home, for parents, grandparents, for God, for country, makes it hard for the student to long for anything. Mr. Bloom sees these things—and he makes perfectly clear some of the negative steps parents must take—get rid of the TV, forbid Rock music, insist on chastity—but, it must be admitted, he really has nothing to say about how to restore the family or religion, how to be a father or mother, or how to worship.⁵ In the end his view of these matters is that of a teacher who has belatedly discovered he needs the family for there to be souls with longing in his classroom. More should not be expected and, considering all the good he points to, need not be required.

The tension between philosophy and the family and the tension between philosophy and religion are abiding. Both Wittgenstein and Socrates upset the parents of their bright students; Nietzsche said a philosopher who marries belongs to comedy (meaning also that one who does not belong to tragedy); perhaps one sign of Socrates becoming the first political philosopher was his marriage to Xanthippe; perhaps Hegel thought he sublated Socrates and the ancients he esteemed because he, unlike them, was happily married. Even more successful in reconciling man and city was Alexis de Tocqueville, who wrote so affectionately of the steady, regular family affection he found in the American democratic family and the chastity that once meant a woman in America could set on a long journey without fear of unpleasantness. Although Mr. Bloom is no Monsieur Tocqueville, his cause is nearly the same as the one good American parents will espouse. Both will want schools in which inquiry and longing thrive.

Mr. Bloom could not arrange for the possibility of such important knowledge for his readers without self-knowledge. As you read the book, you feel he includes himself. Consider what he says in his Preface about what a strange life it is, spending so much time with the young, even preferring their company to that of your coevals; none of Mr. Bloom's previous writings, including his interpretive essay on *The Republic*, in which dialogue Socrates spends his time, as usual, with the young, not his coevals, suggested that Mr. Bloom knew when he began teaching how strange teaching is or how dangerous it might be to the teacher, as well as his students. There are certainly things to be learned from students. When Mr. Bloom writes of courting and of his astonishment at the way his students seldom say "I love you" and don't want their love to last forever, one can hardly recognize the author of the essay on Shakespeare's

Othello, in which Iago comes out smelling like a rose—a real he-man knower compared to the contemptibly innocent Desdemona and the, consequently, contemptibly foolish Othello.⁶

Or consider Mr. Bloom's praise of the family; although he is not a family man, he not only praises the family with warmth, but writes with something like a fatherly concern for students. So also Bloom's respect for reverence, when he tells us what life was like in his parent's home, where the reading of the Bible, with its beautiful stories, dread commands, and stern love made his parents' and grandparents' lives, so poor in wealth and station, nonetheless so very rich. This is not the Mr. Bloom of even ten years ago, whose essay on Shakespeare's *Richard II* burns with anti-Christian ire.⁷ As Mr. Bloom himself tells us, many of the things he now sees are later discoveries.

When he began teaching, he thought the good-natured, if unlearned students arriving at his college classes showed that nature is a blank slate. Only the shocking decline in their souls' readiness to inquire and learn about the most important things showed Mr. Bloom that nature needs nurture before college, the nurture of families with strong affections and the nurture of churches and temples filled with reverence. Mr. Bloom confesses he did not know how important these things are, how indispensable family and piety are to the possibility of philosophy itself, and he confesses this despite the fact that he knows its recognition was always there to be had in Plato's *Republic*, which he himself translated and has taught for years. Teachers who learn from the books they teach are very rare; few professors of Plato are students of Plato; but perhaps teachers who learn from paying serious, sympathetic attention to the vices and the miseries of their students are even rarer. Mr. Bloom is such a *rara avis*.

III. A TEACHER THROUGH AND THROUGH

"To my students" reads the dedication of Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind*. The author means his old students, the ones he still sees, has dinner with, talks with on the phone, years after they first showed up in a class, at Cornell, or Toronto, or now Chicago, many of whom are themselves now teachers, out in the universities of North America, and perhaps elsewhere in the West. These students must know who they are, must know that he finds good in them, since he has recommended them, if not exactly how he esteems them, which ones he dubs the "most scholarly," "the deepest," and "the most successful."

Yet Mr. Bloom's dedication surely includes other students. No teacher can know entirely who his students are. Perhaps some quiet student who only showed up for a few classes, or a wild one who was always a problem, or one who came for years and then disappeared without a word, or one who only read

him, perhaps a young man in Paraguay five hundred years from now, will, one day, turn out to have learned the most from his teacher. Who are Socrates' students? The ones we see with him so much, the talkative ones, good-natured Glaukon, retentive Adeimantus, and pious Polemarchus, the wild Thrasymachus, the brilliant Alcibiades, the gentle, brave Xenophon, or the quiet Aristodemus and the even quieter Plato? Surely all are Socrates' students. So, too, Mr. Bloom, who says no book has told him more about students, about teaching, and about himself than Plato's *Republic*. Thus, "To my students" must also include future students as well, either the ones he can expect to show up wherever he is, perhaps continuing at Chicago, or at some university of the American future in which the University will have assumed the double stewardship Bloom challenges it to take up in his Conclusion: the stewardship of philosophy and of political freedom. And if such universities should arise because of this book, because parents and citizens have taken it to heart, then they, too, would have become the "students" to whom the book is dedicated. Failing that, if some rich individual upon reading the book should found a single such university, then what greater, fitting honor could he or she receive than to know that they too were among the "students" to whom Allan Bloom dedicated his most teacherly book.

Finally, Mr. Bloom must mean more than his good students, those long known to him, many now his fellow teachers, and some his friends; he must also mean all those "souls without longing" that he describes in his book, for whom he also cares, and after whom he was going to title the book.

Yet a philosopher, for example Nietzsche, would say it is strange to spend so much time with the living when you have the best of the dead to converse with (*The Dawn*, 566). Nietzsche also says, as a corollary, that although a philosopher will love solitude or the company of his confreres, he will also, out of the love of knowledge, spend time with his inferiors, especially with the most honest among them, the cynics. Love of knowledge is the motive of the philosopher, why he attends to dirty things, like vice (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 26, 29),⁸ or why the doctor gets experience of disease, or the judge, once he is well and securely habituated in virtue, gets to know criminals (*Republic* 409a–e). Is it also the motive of the teacher? Did the teacher begin with such motives, but change after they led him to students?

One thing is sure, the book is by a teacher. All his adult life Mr. Bloom has been teaching, in class and out, in lectures and in writing, in visits and phone calls. For him teaching is not something he does Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning. It is not limited to the campus or the term. In him his students find someone ready to talk not only about this book and this course but this whole life. Bloom tells us how pleased he was with the student's postcard from Europe thanking him for inciting him to see such splendid things. He must have been even more pleased with the many letters from former students thanking him, explicitly or not, for inciting them to see splendid things in life.

So too Bloom's writing. Look at the list of his books printed in the front of this one; they are all teacherly books; in them Mr. Bloom translates, introduces, and recommends. What interpreting he does is never so complete as to leave no room for the inquiring reader. In these books he connects the hard questions and long inquiries in the great books with the easy queries and short passions of the young. He shows the student how his confused desire to amount to something, to know himself, to satisfy his passions, all the things that brought him to college, can be satisfied as with nothing else by reading such books as *The Republic* together with an Allan Bloom and with fellow students similarly stirred up. By so doing Mr. Bloom either discovers the long questions in the queries and quips, the deep passion in the short crush—discovers or midwives them, or perhaps even begets them. Even Mr. Bloom's essays on Shakespeare have this teacherly intention.⁹ It is reported that more than a dozen out of sixteen freshmen Mr. Bloom taught in a Directed Studies Seminar at Yale in the '60s are leading the kind of thoughtful life he introduced them to. Now men in the fullness of thoughtful or active life, they would surely declare with gratitude how much they owe to him. I myself have seen a large auditorium full of students listening to Mr. Bloom, all attentive, some gleaming, each one feeling, "Here is a man who will help me become what I am meant to be."

By inspiring confidence, Mr. Bloom also elicits confidences and confessions. How else could he learn the things he knows about students. As he probes the students ("So, what music do you really like, c'mon . . ."), he must convince them that knowing oneself, far from being an impediment to greatness, is absolutely required by it; no greatness without self-knowledge. No real study of Plato without admitting that you, yes even now, hanker after the Rolling Stones. Confess then. It should not surprise us to hear that when Bloom gave his annual lecture on *Madame Bovary* at Cornell the room was filled with faculty wives. To him as to his teacher, Emma lying dead has more longing in her than the pharmacist Homais or the Priest Bournisien, representatives of the Enlightenment and the Ancient Regime.¹⁰ Most people listening to Bloom feel he understands them, even when he is critical of their vices and opinions. They hope that his witty rejoinders and ready ridicule may educate them. Surely few go just to enjoy how his witty remarks educate others. Others, reflecting on how much they just laughed at his caricature of their enemy, guess who his next victim will be, and withdraw from range. Considering this, one wonders about the relation between the souls of the students Bloom describes and the souls of his best students, whom he presumably knows best; are they the same? Utterly different? Or overlapping? And who would confess good things about themselves to an observer with such an eye for the seedy? If one of Bloom's students really did love his girl friend, would he tell Bloom? Be that as it may, Mr. Bloom could not learn all that he has without keen eyes; I am told that his seminar students used to practice masking their thoughts in class, but to no

avail. ("Now Mark, . . . I saw it, a thought in your eyes. Come on, tell me what you are thinking.") From such questions and even more prying and flattering ones ("Tell me, Peter, you seem to know Jim so well, What makes him tick?"), Bloom must have learned much, even if other things he might have learned retreated with those who knew them. For every single quotation from a student in the book, there must have been hours of others from which he selected. As he introduced them to Mozart, they introduced him to their lives, their fears and loves, and their ambitions and aspirations.

It is a truth too well known to be declared that today most University teachers do not like the time they spend in the classroom. What Gadamer once said to me, "Yes, of course, the best situation for writing is one course, on what you are writing on," is not self-evident in America. If offered retirement with full pay, upon the condition that they not teach, few teachers now teaching in American higher education would refuse. One of the most alluring things a dean can say to a prestigious candidate is, "We will reduce your teaching load." (The common use of the word "load" is revealing.) Better yet if the Dean can croon, "You won't have to teach at all." Since World War II almost all these universities have added resident writers, and yet I can think of only two stories in which the passionate inquiries that take place in the classroom count: Lionel Trilling's "Of that Time, Of this Place," and Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. Since the curriculum at most of these universities declares "Real life is elsewhere," it is no surprise that most of the teachers teaching it also think so.

This conceded, it is as Leo Strauss said, observing the enormous and rapid expansion of the universities in America after World War II: "Good teachers, unlike good farmers, are not so easy to find." Such a teacher will count time spent in class as a pleasure like no other. He will know he was born for this room as for few others. There you can not only report on your own inquiries, but carry on new ones; with good students, such inquiries turn you into a student again, for always, when you are studying the work of some great mind, that great mind will be in that classroom, teaching you. To his students who were departing to become teachers, Dr. Strauss offered a single maxim, "Always suppose there is a silent student in your class who is your superior in heart and in mind." Time spent in a classroom with such an expectation will almost always be more rewarding than time spent with colleagues, however good. No man who has published on something will ever change his mind, said Dr. Strauss.¹¹ Then again, it is a sheer delight to see the young puppies, as Strauss called them, coming into their own, becoming dogs, through play and through its best friend, learning. Yet while grown dogs may only be instances of doggishness, men seem more than instances of the idea of man. Some certainly do.

I suppose Mr. Bloom would say, and in a way has said, that he is the teacher he is because he was once such a puppy. Being student to that teacher,

meeting Plato through him, and being grateful, have made him what he is. Mr. Bloom is that rare thing, a teacher, and his book is rarer still, a book by a teacher, because he had Dr. Strauss for a teacher. How does a student repay such gratitude? Well, is not Mr. Bloom's account of the souls of his students something his teacher, Leo Strauss, would learn something from? I believe it is and that that makes Mr. Bloom one of the few.

Having been a student of such a teacher, having had the inchoate aspirations of his freshman soul satisfied by being set on a path of insatiable high desire, Mr. Bloom considers the impediments his present students face, ones he did not have to face, ones that seem utterly novel, and he wonders whether the experience he was privileged to have and has had the pleasure of encouraging in many others, will not disappear from the face of the earth. To prevent that, he writes.

IV. THE CAVE BENEATH THE CAVE

Consider for a minute three tortures. Imagine being compelled by an injury to stay indoors all the time, in a small room, able to sit up only a few hours a day. What sorts of things would you do and think? Pascal says all our troubles come down to the fact that we cannot sit still in a small room. What would you do? All of us know something about what we would do from our experience of illness, from having a long flu. Now imagine the first torture; imagine the radio on all the time—you couldn't turn it off, you couldn't cut the volume, you couldn't select the station; you just have to sit there, listening to a steady stream of popular music, news bulletins, advertisements, and the like. Take the worst rock music, the most anxious news show, the most discontenting advertisement, and the most inane disc jockey, and think of listening to that all day and all night, without end.

Of course, you would still have images in your mind from your time in the world, of friends, of homes, of streams and fields, and of sunlight. Let us imagine the second torture; imagine being chained into your chair or bed, with your head fixed forward and a TV on: poor sound, poor images, soap operas, sitcoms, news in short bits, pictures to rouse emotions, nothing long enough to gain clarity, announcers with incomprehensibly excited voices and perfect teeth, athletes with strong bodies, advertisements with smooth bodies, all streaming in front of you, all without your choosing it, or being able to turn away from it. Of course, when one is sick with the flu one can read; indeed, often we greet a coming cold with a certain pleasure: "Now I will have time to read that book." Very well, let us imagine our third torture. Imagine being allowed to read, but only allowed to read the most popular newspapers, say *U. S. A. Today* and the *Washington Post*, the most popular magazines, *Time*, *Playboy*, and *House and Garden* say, and only the most popular books, say

only the ones listed on *The New York Times* bestseller list. Imagine yourself then apprehending the world dimly, with the vivid things being diet, self-help, and medicine. Would these not be tortures? Mind-washings? Enough to make one scream, "No more lies, no more pettiness, no more ugliness, no more wretched self-esteem." Or make one pray, "Deliver me, Lord, from this city of the wretched, the wicked, and the contented." And also make one reflect, "Why do I remember so little of the real world? Why don't I recall any books I read? Why did I not memorize more songs, stories, and prayers? What did I do in college? What did I do in life?"

These three tortures do not, of course, need to be imagined. One visit to the "homes" so many American parents now stretch out their lives in will acquaint you with what I have described. But with this difference: like my prisoner, these old people had a life before their torture to remember. Imagine then something worse. Imagine growing up without any such life before torture. Imagine growing up with parents who instead of protecting you from these three tortures, instead of attaching you to good things, instead of training you in good habits, and instructing you and your brothers and sisters in virtue, instead of teaching you to measure and to guide yourselves by high duties, and instead of setting worthy examples themselves, visit these three tortures upon you. Imagine growing up with the radio as your mother, the TV as your father, the newspapers as your country, and the books on *The New York Times* list as your school. Thus both orphaned and incarcerated, would you not be tempted to escape through sex, drugs, rock, rebellion, and hate?

Allan Bloom has written a book about this. What I have invited you to imagine as three tortures, Mr. Bloom says is the truth about the present generation of college youths. They have not really lived in homes, they have not had parents, they have not belonged to Churches, and they have not found substitutes for these good causes of good in the schools and colleges they go on to. The void left by the abdication of these authorities has been filled by rock music, swollen appetites, and chic sophistry. Their heroes are savage and criminal, their pleasures crude and fast, their minds weak and enraged, and their souls not even empty, because only something that longs to be filled but isn't could be described as empty.

Plainly my description of these three tortures is indebted to Plato,¹² to the account of education his Socrates offers in *The Republic*, where he likens the lives of most men to life in a cave, seated as in a theater, unable to turn their heads, watching shadows cast on a wall by shadow-makers, themselves unseen by the prisoners, who have never seen anything real, let alone the sun that shines outside the cave or the many things it shines on. Although Mr. Bloom's understanding of the soul and its highest calling, and of the city and its just requirements is Platonic, he does not think that our present situation in America is the cave as Plato's Socrates describes it. Every city is a cave. To Socrates every city there has been or will be, or perhaps is likely to be, might be likened to

such a cave. The only exception is Callipolis, the best city, the city he describes in speech in the course of the night conversation that is *The Republic*. Although Socrates would not escape from Athens, when Crito had horses waiting behind the jail to whisk him to Crete or some other barbaric place, he surely included Athens in his Cave likeness. Presumably the "city" founded by Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton, Franklin, and Jay, perpetuated by Lincoln and blood of our forefathers, and generously defended on foreign ground since, would be such a cave to Plato and is one to Bloom.

However, the cave Mr. Bloom thinks America has become is not the one Socrates mentioned. The shadow-makers in the Athenian cave were Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes. These are the poets Socrates quarrels with. They were the poets of the city of Athens, the teachers of the young, the supporters of the family, and the boosters of the polity. In the tragic theaters of that city the citizens sat, looked forward, and beheld beautiful images as real. In other words, minds now included in everybody's list of the "great books" are precisely the ones Socrates says rule in Athens and whose rulership makes it a Cave. Just as everyone but the philosopher chooses the life of the tyrant (in Hades in the story of Er, in Book X), so every city ruled by the poets threatens the philosopher. Although Socrates does go so far as to suggest that Homer might be an exception, when he calls him a friend, as he does no other previous man, still he says one must honor truth more than Homer; not even a philosophic poet would make a city other than a cave. About including Homer among the books that should be called great and read by the young, we may reasonably conceive Socrates to have had doubts.

Since the single explicit recommendation Mr. Bloom makes in his whole book is the adoption of a great books curriculum, it cannot be that he thinks we are in a cave such as Socrates describes. We should have such luck! No, we are in the cave beneath the cave (to employ, with adaption, a phrase of Leo Strauss).¹³ Thus it is that Mr. Bloom contrasts present-day students with their counterparts thirty years ago. The students he first taught came from homes, with parents; something had been required of them, they knew something about beauty, about obedience and about adventure, and they had looked up to something. America may have been a cave ruled by the shadow-maker John Locke (as Bloom seems to say in one place), but it was not so bad; Mr. Bloom particularly likes it because it did not make longing so rare as to make the life of philosophy a nearly impossible choice for some of the young. "Let us bring back that cave!" one of Bloom's readers might exclaim. Would Bloom say so? His description of the youth of today, and accordingly his concern with education, is much more anxious than Plato's. Although the Platonic Socrates does make distinctions between peoples, between the barbaric and the civilized, between barbarians and Greeks, he also seems to think that the lower limit of human things is fixed. Dimly lit as the Cave is, it has a floor. There is no cave beneath the Cave and no Abyss beneath it, as Nietzsche felt. For Bloom there

seems to be. By falling into it, America has discovered the Abyss. By falling into it, or by building it.

If we inquire of Mr. Bloom how this happened, we receive the answer, in his Part One, that the abdication of the parents, the greed of the youth-merchants, and the ambition of the sophists (such as Mick Jagger) corrupted the souls of the young. If we go further, into Part Three, we receive the answer that the Universities have fashioned this unusual and unprecedented cave, for they first spread the views that undermined the authority of the parents, the Churches, and the country; and if we inquire still further, we receive the answer that the intellectuals who rule the Universities are themselves ruled, however imperfectly, by the philosophers; more specifically that their teachings are somehow both the direct consequence and an evident traduction of the philosophizing of Nietzsche and Heidegger. Unresolved in Mr. Bloom's account then is the paradox or contradiction that the thinkers who see most deeply into our condition, who devoted the most deep thought to nihilism and how to overcome it, are also those who seem to have contributed the most to its victory, and in the case of Heidegger to have joined with zeal in one of its political expressions.

Mr. Bloom eschews a simple explanation for the decline of America. Plato, his teacher, might have attributed it to wealth. America won the World War; it emerged from four years of destruction the most powerful nation on earth; in the atomic bomb, it had a veritable ring of Gyges; it could enforce its will anywhere. It didn't. It refused the temptation of Gyges on a world scale. Instead, it settled down to enjoying the fruits of war; it gave itself up to commerce, to the agitating pursuit of wealth, and the absorbing enjoyment of its fruits. It behaved like a warrior stripping rings from the corpses of its enemies. It fell to looting. Twenty years after defeating both Germany and Japan, the twelve and a half million soldiers who did so in khakis put on lounge suits, fur coats, and sparkling rings. It is an old story; you will find it in Machiavelli and in Ibn Khaldûn, as well as Plato; nations go through cycles; virtue brings victory; victory brings wealth; wealth brings vice; vice brings defeat.¹⁴

One might add to this a deeper stratum. Serious men, Nietzsche, Churchill, C. S. Lewis, and Heidegger for example, have worried that the disappearance of pain, the acceleration in speed, the mass effects of modern science, above all, the increase of our domination over nature achieved by it would lead to the decline of the human species. In America the scientific conquest of nature, called for by Bacon and Descartes, has been carried further, especially since the Second World War, than in any other land. Will it lead to a decline in the American species? In this war, too, virtue brings victories; victories bring wealth and wealth brings vice. Bloom eschews this explanation; he thinks that our decline comes from the decline of our minds; he seeks a wholly intellectual explanation. That is one reason why Part Two exists; it is about the source of our students' impoverishment; Part Three is about the active agency. Perhaps it

is also why Bloom is not unhappy with the Enlightenment refashioning of the University; he has no quarrel with its attempt to master nature, as Rousseau did, and little suspicion that its attempt is founded in intellectual error, as Klein and others have asserted.¹⁵ Before there was Heidegger, there was Nietzsche, before him Locke, before him Bacon, and before them all, there was Machiavelli, the founder of modernity, with his anger at God, his dismissal of the good as “ideal,” his preference for effectual truth instead of truth, and his characterization of nature first as a river to be channeled, then as a woman to be beaten.¹⁶ The modern idea that nature is more stuff than standard, more plastic than pattern, more enemy than friend, and thus fit for a just conquest of nature originates in a passionate fear of death, understood as a nothing, to which no traveller will ever go. It is this idea, born of fear not knowledge, that connects the modern account of nature with modern society, especially modern America with modern medicine, which the more it whispers promises of bodily immortality, increases the deficit, distracts the dying, impedes a good death, and weakens the citizenry.¹⁷ Mr. Bloom is concerned with all that has orphaned the souls of his students, and rightly so, but makes no connection between the fading of the family and the scientific origin of the inventions that have helped fade it (TV, the pill, and the fast-feeder microwave) and the future ones that will vaporize it. When genetic engineering can manufacture test-tube children, fathers and mothers will no longer be necessary, and Governments and their Universities can raise their own students, which will allow lesbians to claim first dibs on the girls and homosexuals on the boys.¹⁸ In this brave new University, old-style couples will have to court in secret, brave censorship to say, “I love you. And will always,” and hide their children in the bullrushes. Bloom is right to say our ruin is in our ideas, but wrong to omit the Enlightenment idea that a conquest of nature is worth winning. As Nietzsche first saw, the coming progressive conquest of nature would require the deliberate willing of those restraints, once provided by nature, without which there can be no virtues.

Although Part One of *The Closing* is written with spirit, and dismay, sometimes even nausea, although arguments are sometimes offered against the corruptions described, and although, as a consequence, the steps a family and country might take to correct these corruptions are fairly clear, nevertheless, one receives the impression that nothing can be done. Part Two is chiefly responsible for this impression, for it tells how it is well-nigh inevitable that the high thought of Nietzsche and the deep thought of Heidegger would lead America and its youth to become nihilists, not merely encourage it, but lead to it. Here in this part we hear that the Founders of America built on nothing more elevated than the pursuit of comfortable self-preservation taught by the clever John Locke.¹⁹ Viewed as a Cave, America today is just a conflict between shadows once formed by Locke and shadows now forming by Nietzsche. The young souls who are so vividly described by Bloom in Part One turn out to be such stuff as Heidegger has dreamed on! Is it true that the lives, deeds, and

thoughts of most men are the sole, direct consequence of the thinking of the very few thinkers of the first rank? Does nature count for so little? And even if nearly so, would nature count for so little if nurture had not first been withdrawn? Some inquiry into this mystery, of how we are made up of both nature and thought, seems to me required by the evidence of both that Mr. Bloom points to.

That these students speak of “values” instead of purposes, “life styles” instead of ways of life, of appetites instead of virtues, “relationships” instead of bonds, “sex lives” instead of courtships, of the “self” instead of the soul, is certainly an important cause of their misunderstanding of themselves, of life, and others, of their impoverished lives and their unjust relation to the whole universe. But are these dark glasses the long, indirect consequence of Nietzsche?

To prove that Nietzsche and Heidegger devastated the souls of students in America, Bloom would have to show how the language in which they understand themselves stems from Nietzsche and Heidegger. Does Bloom show that? He might have done so in either of two ways. He might have taken some of the terms that characterize Nietzsche’s thinking: *amor fati*, order of rank, the will-to-power, eternal return of the same, the Last Man, the Surpassing Man (*Übermensch*),²⁰ or the terms that Nietzsche gives a peculiar turn to: master morality, slave morality, values, and history, and then he might have shown how these terms, directly or passing through Heidegger, get into the speech in which young Americans understand themselves, or into the music that moves them. Or Bloom might have started with his students’ language: self, sex, high, rock, etc., and their music and traced both to Nietzsche and Heidegger. Or, best of all and necessary, he might have done both together.

The order of his Parts would suggest that he attempt the latter, that is, that he go from student speech to philosophic speech. It seems to me that Bloom does so only intermittently or incompletely. The way Bloom shows how the word “values” (in what might be called the plural of vagueness) glides off our tongues and gums up our minds is wonderful, both witty and instructive. However, the term “value” is never tied down at the other end in Nietzsche, who seems to have been the most important inventor of it. Nietzsche is mentioned of course, but neither the nobility of the term’s beginning, for example in *Beyond Good and Evil*, No. 34, where Nietzsche tells us he employs it in the sense painters use it, nor the consequent difficulty of the term in his lexicon seem to be appreciated. In one passage (p. 143) Bloom alludes to a famous episode in *Zarathustra I* as if it were titled, “On the Thousand and One Values,” instead of “On the Thousand and One Goals.” True, Zarathustra claims that all the thousand goals so far placed over man have turned out to be values, but that only makes the search for *the* one goal necessary and urgent. In *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche gives the formula of his happiness as “A Yes, a No, a straight line, a goal . . .” (“ein Ja, ein Nein, eine gerade Linie, ein Ziel . . .”)

Never would Nietzsche have written “a value.” Facing the eternal return, facing the question: “Could you bear your life once more?” is not a value. Zarathustra himself faces this question at the climax of Part Three, and Nietzsche faced it in his autobiographical *Ecce Homo*.²¹ This said, it is very hard to write about Nietzsche in the brief compass Bloom chose; Nietzsche has so many levels, long ladders, and scales, it is hard to stay well-tempered over the whole scale of him.²²

If it is true that Nietzsche’s thoughts were vulgarized by various teaching intellectuals, as Bloom asserts and I am prepared to believe, then one would like to meet the intermediaries between the philosopher and the students. One would like to see a tracing of the path. And if that path can be traced, then one would want to know whether Bloom thinks the vulgarization inevitable. Was the misunderstanding of the intellectuals a likely misunderstanding, for which a philosopher, who should have prudence among his virtues, is responsible? Or was it no misunderstanding at all, as seems asserted “true” by the Left and by some feminists, whose recent appropriation of Nietzsche Bloom reports?²³ If recent American life is like a thoughtful German book poorly translated and even dumbed down, then one would like to see it proved by minute attention to the details of the original German book. Nevertheless, Bloom must have been astonished that things his teacher, Dr. Strauss, said would be the consequences of the victory of modern German thought in the University seemed, forty years later, to be proven by the very speech of students, presidents, and cabdrivers.²⁴

Nothing could be clearer from Mr. Bloom’s book than that he has spent a long time teaching Plato and Rousseau. However, although Nietzsche figures importantly in the book and undoubtedly sharpened Mr. Bloom’s eyes for souls without longing, through his portrait of the Last Man, it is not clear that Bloom has taught courses on Nietzsche much. The part of Nietzsche that characterized modernity as the “substitution of daily newspapers for daily prayers,” the part that says “one does not read Pascal, one loves Pascal,” that never ceased to think not only about Socrates but about Christ, and that thought a good deal about death and what it would mean to die at the right time, this part of Nietzsche not only does not appear in the book, but does not seem to be present in the mind of the author. Even in Part One where “religion” is lauded, or its absence lamented, no discussion of death and our relation to death is mentioned, except in the course of his curt dismissal of the presumption that his students might have been affected by the possibility of worldwide nuclear war. I doubt Nietzsche would dismiss that presumption with the presumer. Few hack at the roots of evil, fewer still strike at the tap root.

As I begin to teach *Hamlet* and *Lear*, I often ask students how they would prefer to die. A majority, sometimes even a majority of the avowed Christians, say they would prefer to die painlessly while asleep. When Montaigne said he would too, he was the first man in a thousand years to say so. Most of my students are entirely unaware of how extraordinary their answer is and how

revealing. Cancer has for a long time been our most terrifying death; perhaps AIDS has lately superseded it; both terrorize Americans for the same reason; both command the victim to prepare for death. (The second asks: "Are you guilty?") Accidental death on the highway is the form of death we fear least, and do the least to prevent precisely because no one needs to prepare for it. It is not necessary for Bloom to tell us whether he has asked questions about death; but to look deeply into one's students perhaps he must be ready to ask them such questions and to ask them, he must ask himself. If one taught Pascal or Shakespeare instead of Plato, or perhaps the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* as well as *The Republic*, perhaps one would find out different things from one's students, or attract somewhat different students. Certain it is that to understand Nietzsche one has to face such questions as he poses, such as "free death?" (*Zarathustra I*, 21).

The most important cause of the lack of longing in the souls of the students Bloom has observed is hardly mentioned by him; that is, it is mentioned once and then ignored. It is the loss of eternity. Every insight of Nietzsche into modernity comes down to it and every noble struggle to overcome it. For him personally, the thought of eternal return brought the greatest dread and provided, ultimately, the greatest joy. For mankind Nietzsche thought it provided at once the best and the last hope. He hoped eternal return would replace eternity.

What Bloom describes so well, but without the name, is a new kind of human being: the Teenager. There were no teenagers before World War II; compare the entries in Webster II (1934) and Webster III (1961). The youths of that earlier time and all previous times wanted to grow up, to become men and women, fathers and mothers; their heroes were adults: warriors, statesmen, saints, scientists, doctors, explorers, and patriots. The Teenager does not want to grow up; his heroes are other teenagers, rock stars of whatever age. The Teenager wants to live in the present as much as possible; his food is fast, his music is ephemeral, attention short, and his life nomadic. The Teenager leads the life most oblivious of eternity, the least concerned with eternal God or the eternal Good, or their worthy images, immortal fame, and living children. Of all the lives a man can choose, the life of the Teenager is the one most conducive to conflating Being with Time. The Last Man, American style, is the Teenager.

Is it accidental that these "mutants," whose lives are so entirely lived in the present, came into being after the atomic bomb and the specter of the possible extinction of the human species that it sent up into the high, blue sky? Although this novel fear had been thought about, variously, by Nietzsche, Churchill, Heidegger, and C. S. Lewis, it only haunted the popular mind after the atomic bomb was first exploded. The contradictory result of that event—inward despair about life and outward bustle, grave doubt about the modern scientific project and obsessive delight in its comforts, and painful misgivings

about America and thoughtless satisfaction at being American—appeared first in the parents and then in their children. The generation of parents whose negligence brought the Teenager into being were stunned by the idea of there being no future for the human species. The thought “What does it all matter” and the contrary anxiety “I hope I get my life in before it happens” detached them from their own children. Their children, the first Teenagers, entered a world that might disappear utterly in front of them; they were the first generation on earth ever to grow up with this prospect; the first generation to grow up whispering, “I hope we get our lives in before it happens” and the first to wonder before they had children, if their children would continue after them. The loss of the sempiternity of the species loosened their relation to the other forms of eternity, God, the idea of the good, and even truth. Without some bond to eternity, it is hard to die well, and those who cannot die well are not likely to long for anything.²⁵

Perhaps the most important pedagogic deficiency in Bloom’s book is this; you never feel that any of the great thinkers Bloom mentions, even the ones he has clearly learned from, are being confronted, or have been recently confronted. What does he ask them? What do they say to him? Is there a conversation? Bloom certainly praises them, and by so doing does lead readers to their doorstep, but never introduces us to them. Never does he pause over a passage from Nietzsche; the longest passage from a great mind in the book, from Shakespeare, is an undigested lump. Bloom shows us that Heidegger’s Rektoratsrede laudation of the Nazis was harmful and even that it was revealing, but not why it was also sad. We never get to meet Heidegger the thinker of the first order; never spend a slow hour in his class.²⁶ Granted that “coming down” to students and coming way down to the public require putting on masks, donning motley, and acting, even giving oneself over to an excited tempo, must it mean forgetting that from which you have come down? In one place Bloom tells us he loves to introduce students to the music of Mozart; his own excited tempos have other sources, perhaps Napoleonic Beethoven, uneasy Bartok, or firebird Stravinsky. Everything is either allegro or presto; what andante there is only creates the feeling of rubato; nothing is adagio. Nothing seems to come to a resolution; it is excitement without harmony, war without peace, or war that has made the warrior forget peace, forget home. Nor can I believe that Bloom has taught the American Founding and Lincoln; no knowledge based upon recent teaching seems present.

For most of us, it is probably true that, as someone said, you only know what you have taught in the last two years. The upshot of this observation is that it is important to teach as many of the great minds as possible, year after year, *Diu noctuque incubando*, unto death. Dr. Strauss taught about thirty, including Nietzsche; he was also that rarest exception; although he never, so far as I know, taught Heidegger, or the American Founding, and, I believe, taught Pascal, Aquinas, and C. S. Lewis only once,²⁷ he knew them, as if he had

taught them the previous week. Without knowing these things as Dr. Strauss did, should one speak of them? More generally, can a popularization of Strauss overcome a vulgarization of Nietzsche and Heidegger? In particular, if one understood Strauss, would one popularize his thoughts? Strauss suggested that the question of philosophy is: *Quid sit Deus*? Bloom writes that the question is: What is Man?

Bloom's incomplete inquiries raise another question. Towards the beginning of his book, he mentions how strange the life of a teacher is. In particular, the very pleasure of encouraging inquiry in others can be an impediment to your own inquiry. As the years go by, there ought to be more and more distance between where you are and where your new students are starting. (If there is not, then what have you been doing?) Yet, each year, each class, despite the advances you have made, you must once again "go down" to the freshmen (to Piraeus, to the City of the Motley Cow) and once again start afresh. For the sake of the students will you not have to feign ignorance? And does not imitating something, especially for a long time, soon make it a habit? Don't we become what we imitate, as Socrates explains in *The Republic*? Indeed, will you not have to cultivate some ignorance in yourself? And won't that be tempting? It is so easy to stimulate freshmen, to avoid their hard questions by saying, "Well, that's a really important question," and promise a conversation which, intentionally or not, will never occur. You can tell yourself, "It is for their own good, so they will work harder for an answer; so they will read great books harder." So saying, one may avoid such reading oneself. Nothing will bear up under the strain of continuous reading for thirty years so well as a great book, continually rewarding fresh study, forcing you to learn more each time, but the temptations should not be underestimated. It is as Nietzsche says: "He who is a teacher through and through takes everything seriously in relation to his students—in the end, even himself." About a teacher, one who writes about teaching, and one who writes about his students, who gets to know them, inquires about their private life, draws conclusions about their souls, their families, and the state of their country, one would like to know whether time spent with them ever turned into a conversation from which the teacher learned anything he did not already know? Or whether the teacher began such conversations, out of class or in, with the expectation that he might be talking in the presence of a silent student, his superior in heart and in mind? Certain it is that Mr. Bloom cares for the students he reports about, for the intellectual good of their souls and for the good of those remarkably many of them who have become teachers. Indeed, for them and for the situation they find themselves teaching in, Bloom seems more concerned than Plato was for the city.

What kind of a virtue is care? Let it suffice for the moment to note that like Nietzsche, and unlike Plato, Bloom nearly believes that "use can . . . change the stamp of nature."²⁸ Longing really might be driven out of the human soul. The similarity between the Last Man in Nietzsche and the Democratic Man in

Plato is the pointlessness of their lives; the difference is that while the Democratic Man shifts about in his desires, trying this and that, the Last Man doesn't try anything. The Democratic Man has some aspirations, which last for a couple of hours, on Thursday, if it doesn't rain; the Last Man has none at all.²⁹ Only in the Cave beneath the Cave can such souls without longing have been fashioned. In his concern with such souls and the cave never mentioned by Plato, Bloom seems to side with Nietzsche as against Plato. However, we can only say this if we are sure that a long conversation between Plato and Nietzsche would not result in the latter convincing the former that nature in man is less enduring, more malleable than might have been supposed, and that therefore the extinction of philosophy from the face of the earth is a possibility, and hence of such great concern to a philosopher that he must try to rule the world, rather than shun it. Care is, then, the virtue that justifies the rule of the philosopher. The premise of Care is that nature is not, or is so malleable as nearly not to be nature, and this premise strictly understood and thoroughly held renders philosophy impossible. When the gift-giving Zarathustra of Nietzsche discovers that "the best want to rule," he is still not philosophizing. He who becomes a ruler through and through takes everything seriously in relation to the ruled—in the end even himself.

V. SOULS WITH LONG LONGING AND SMALL CELLS

Although Mr. Bloom would not mistake himself for Socrates, it is clear he measures himself against Socrates, measures all else as well, indeed loves Socrates. It seems to me this love has much to do with his book being philosophic.

In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Mr. Bloom looks as seriously at things around him as he reads great books, such as Plato's *Republic*. To do so is innocent, commonsensical, and reasonable. It is also rare. There must be a thousand serious teachers of such great books in the University today, good teachers, good readers, and good citizens. Yet Bloom is one of the very few who has looked at the University, its teachers, and his students with the same interrogative disposition he finds in his books.³⁰ In Part One he looks at the souls of his students, in Part Three he looks at the University; and throughout, he looks at teaching. Always he looks at things with Socrates in mind. Great benefits follow.

By writing *The Closing of the American Mind*, Mr. Bloom has given a great gift to a small, important group at the University today. I do believe that the heart of many a young student who so longed to know answers to the important questions in life that he or she chose teaching as the best way of life to continue that quest and now finds himself in one of the universities or colleges of North America must have been gladdened by reading Mr. Bloom's book.

In it such teachers will recognize the passions and the pleasures of the life they have dedicated themselves to. In it they will find the truth about the soul that they now know, its longing to know itself, to rise to its natural nobility, and to comprehend the whole. Knowing that and the happiness it alone brings, they take pleasure in assisting others, younger than themselves, to it. They enter the classroom seeking them and at the same time finding themselves.

There is no place on earth quite like a classroom; in it you can say what you think, almost so. Although the young are formed by convention and inclined by their strong appetities to prejudice, no other group is as willing to examine its own convictions, especially in a democracy, especially in our confused times, when ordinary folks have to resolve philosophic questions just to live. Although no young person, being untried, can be said to have character, they do have less baggage. Try to talk with adults, say at a dinner party; nothing that is not a quip, nothing that is not short, nothing that is not entertaining, gets heard. The young also have more leisure. The best time for classes is in the evening. That way, when the time comes to an end, the eager students can stay for more. There in the classroom, as only in friendship with your equals, discipleship to your betters, or solitude with yourself, the life of the mind lives naturally. There you may also discover what in fact you do think. In truth, the classroom is a place to find out what is to be thought.

No other kind of good thing can be shared as fully as thought. Ice cream shared is ice cream divided. Thought shared is thought multiplied and sometimes augmented. In the classroom, your students' discoveries are yours as well, and yours may be theirs, too. In the classroom, pursuing the truth most nearly coincides with imparting it, adventure with charity, wisdom with justice. Reading Bloom will then confirm such teachers in the knowledge that the classroom is perhaps the place where the demands of philosophy as a way of life and demands of the city, without which there could be no philosophy, most nearly harmonize.

Friendships that start in classrooms need never end. If they continue, they are bound to increase as the younger grows nearer the older. If the one surpasses the other, so much the better, the teacher will gain from the discoveries of his superior, once his pupil. Such classes make for distant harmonies as well. The friendships between students of the same teacher are most durable, for each can remember not only how imperfect his efforts were, how his teacher used not only to correct them, but how just by being who he is, he continues to teach them how small and one sided they are by comparison. Thus the friends of Socrates, from Plato and Aristotle, to Montaigne and Pascal, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche make a kind of fraternity, brothers because they are sons of the best.

As a term of good studies in such a classroom draws to a close, the teacher will feel sad. "Why not keep going? Why stop just when we were getting in shape? When new thoughts and adventures are beckoning like the India Alex-

ander could not persuade his army to attempt?" Such a teacher will only cheer up by carrying on some of those adventures in the summer, in writing, alone. Yet if all goes well, the scent of fall will bring its own sadness, stirring the adventuring writer to gather his thoughts into some rich, *spätlease* conclusion, before the new class beginning, as usual, finds him reluctant to stop writing,—*Wer jetzt kein Haus hat, baut sich keines mehr*—and yet willing to, knowing that, if all goes well in class as before, this term too will end with him wanting not to stop.

Young teachers whose "prophetic souls" recognize these pleasures as their destiny cannot but take comfort in Mr. Bloom's description of the condition of the students today, their flatness, their lassitude, and their enslavement. Unless you know different, unless you have the good fortune to teach at one of the very few colleges unaffected by the disappearance of longing in the souls of youths today, how will you know for sure that things might be different, unless you hear from someone like Mr. Bloom that it was not always so. Bloom not only describes the students of today with accuracy, their speech, their habits, and the secret springs of their souls, but tells you they are peculiar, like nothing ever before, and very different from what he met when he first began teaching.

He is right. I well remember one Thursday in September telling an opening class to read three chapters of Montaigne's *Essais* and then the following Tuesday noting how thoughtful were the comments of one freshman. Fifteen years later I learned that she hadn't heard that we were to read only three chapters. From evening that Thursday to the morning of the following Tuesday, she had read the whole of the *Essais*, not skimmed, or her comments on the three chapters would not have been so thoughtful, but read, read through and through. Hearing this, I was not surprised to hear that she and her husband, both vice presidents of corporations, read Hegel's *Phenomenology* regularly in the evening. Nor was this Everest without surrounding Himalayas. Regularly in my classes then there would appear a student or two, or three, who by the next meeting had read some work I had mentioned in passing. Night classes regularly went on an hour beyond the close, often hours beyond. At Dartmouth for years I ran a reading group on Friday evening, because students asked for it. Later, when I taught Russian Novel at the University of Dallas, we read *War and Peace*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and *Anna Karenina* in fourteen weeks. The weekly quizzes, weekly journals of 4–5 pages, three long papers (10–15 pages), and a final only seemed to add to the students' happiness; roommates, seeing their friend weeping, decided to read the books and audit the class. A year later a senior said, "After graduation, I am going to read *War and Peace* again. You just don't feel alive when you are not reading it." In those times students regularly did things that surpassed my own capacities.

Competence too was something not unusual. In one freshman English class in 1972, out of 160 papers assigned, only one was late, and I can well believe the story that at some colleges in the '60s, one misspelling and one comma

mistake on a paper was enough to deserve a failure. Complaints were rare. In my first fifteen years, only one student ever mentioned how his expected grade might mar the record he wanted so as to satisfy his post-graduate ambitions, only one student exclaimed “Do you know who I am!” and only one recited how well he had done in high school.³¹ When you caught students cheating, they hung their heads, deans urged you to bring charges, and their parents thanked you. Teachers beginning later will find it hard to believe such tales, except for the fact of Bloom’s assertion and his authority. The man who can describe your own students to you, perhaps better than you yourself could, might just be right that “It was not always so.”

Mr. Bloom also describes the University and again, he says, “It was not always so.” Although he acknowledges that Socrates would not teach in the University,³² he measures the University by how much it promotes Socratic inquiry, and he is right to. The University is the place where students and teachers meet, the one place Americans have a chance to do some thinking at, and the place that has been revolutionized during Bloom’s teaching lifetime.³³

With Tocqueville explicitly and with his teacher, Leo Strauss, silently, Bloom says that the University ought to be an aristocracy; it ought to judge by other than democratic standards; it ought to show the student the long ladder of rank reaching toward heaven; it ought to tell him about other places and times; at the University the student ought to discover sufferings and virtues, beauties and glories, not kenneled by the high school, the marketplace, or the media. The University ought to serve democracy by opposing the majority tyranny that *The Federalist* sees as one of the gravest dangers of popular government. There in the University the life of the mind, the life of inquiry, the *vita contemplativa*, ought to be at home, sheltered from the urgent, self-absorbed, ambitious bustle of the vast commercial republic surrounding it, with which it made a financial pact in the late ‘50s, and the glitzy agenda of the enraged media that has flooded it since 1968.³⁴ Unstated by Bloom is the argument that only by being an aristocracy can the University provide democracy with statesmen capable of encouraging liberty and equality, honoring natural right and natural rights, promoting virtues and comforts, and preserving both self-government and safety.

According to Mr. Bloom, the University has changed since he first began teaching. At Cornell in April of 1969, he saw it change before his eyes. There, under threat from armed students, the faculty changed its vote and granted the students’ demands. In this dramatic event Bloom is right to see revolution. Once the University yields to student desires, appeases tyranny, and fails to protect teachers whose lives have been threatened, it will not be able to fulfill its mission. Nothing can be taught to students who know their threats will get their desires gratified, by teachers who fear their students, at an institution that will not support teachers who do otherwise.³⁵ What happened swiftly, dramati-

cally, publicly at Cornell in 1969, has happened over and over again at the University since. If as Bloom says the capitulation of reason at Cornell was a farce, the capitulation since has been a bad novel. Daily corruption, indignity, futility, forlorn patience, and quiet desperation do not make a good story. A generation ago, a good novel about the University, as witty, ironic, and yet charitable as Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution*, could be written. I doubt that could be done today. "Mortal fools" abound as ever, but there are more philosophic knaves resolute to guy them.

Young teachers must take comfort in Mr. Bloom's description of the chief impediments that the University of the present time has put in the way of study. Here is the way two younger teachers I know (and taught earlier) described some of these impediments upon first contact. Both for a time enjoyed the chance to study in a great books core curriculum, at a college out of the main stream, so far out it must have been like the Blessed Isles (or Chicago when Bloom first went there).³⁶

The first was called to teach some of the same books at an Eastern state college. She wrote, "Students here think having a quiz on *Hamlet*, at the level of 'Name Hamlet's Mother' is a far more troubling experience than any of Hamlet's heartaches. A father suddenly dead, a mother hastily remarried, a wicked uncle prospering, ambition thwarted, inheritance forestalled, your beloved turned cold, your friends distant—none of it much moved these students. It didn't move them in *Hamlet* and, judging from lunch, similar things don't move them in their own lives. So far the only thing that rouses them is the desire to get a just grade, meaning a B, which they regard as their right, due for showing up. They come to class, most of them, without having done the assigned reading. They are not ashamed to admit it. The other day in class one blurted out, 'Do you realize there are no Cliff Notes on Thucydides.' He is one of the better ones. I think I can win him over. Others fit the description a teacher here gave, 'They don't want to buy the Cliff Notes; they want you to be the living Cliff Notes.' Still, most seem to me more sinned against than sinning; for years they have been passed on to the next grade whatever their performance was. I'm ready. I'll start just a step ahead of where they are."

However, the news a months later was not better. "At a faculty meeting, I asked why the student newspaper carries ads for plagiarized papers, complete with an 800 number and an invitation to use your VISA card. The Dean jumped up, 'Free speech, First Amendment,' and sat down. After the meeting, another teacher confided, 'I discovered forty per cent of my class cheating last spring.' 'What did you do?' I asked. 'I announced that the ones who confessed would be forgiven.' But this means that there was really no penalty for cheating; all the wily ones are free to try again, and in a better position. The first time, a student might have worried what would happen if they got caught; now they know. No penalty. The teacher across the hall drew my attention to the Handbook, how it takes 8 tedious steps to convict a student of cheating and one swift

step for a student to harass a teacher with a formal complaint. The other day somebody told me there's a man in town, who makes better than a professor's salary writing students' papers. Today, I read the hour exams. Even though I've scaled things, half deserve failure. We spent a month on Thucydides, and more than half cannot remember who Alcibiades is. They will get only D. F is for those who, in addition, cannot write a paragraph without 5 errors. Before I came I heard this was the 'Swarthmore of the _____ State system,' yesterday I saw the President himself passing out stickers saying '_____ Pride,' and urging the faculty to display them on their cars. Fortunately, some have pride instead." Later that year, when the Challenger blew up, she wrote, "I feel I know why. For the sake of 'public relations,' they passed failing O-Rings and dismissed a school marm from her earthly duties."

At about the same time, another young teacher I know, a teacher of political philosophy this time, was visiting an old private school. At first he reported, "What a beautiful setting, beautiful stone buildings, and chapel. And what facilities. The cafeteria has the best college food I've ever eaten. Better than many hotels. Unlimited ice cream. However, the book store has no books and no one secured the books I ordered two months ago for one course." A little later, he wrote, "When the students do show up for class, many carry in food and drink. Others wear hats drawn over their faces, it seems to mean 'I'm not really here.' Others wear scowls, as if to say, 'What are you going to ask me to do today that I don't want to.' For days now little slips granting extensions to students in my classes have been arriving, signed by deans, not one of whom has ever spoken to me, student or dean. The excuses speak of 'emotional problems' and the vague like.³⁷ These students are so inattentive, I had to give an incontestably 'objective' hour exam. Half got honors, most were Freshmen, and near a third failed, even though I scaled the scores." A little later he reported that there were some fine papers, "Late last night, sleepless, I picked up one paper. It was wonderful, every word counted. When I told the student after class he smiled and said 'That really pleases me, cause I rewrote that paper six times. I've never done that before.' Meanwhile, the chairman has now visited me eight times, always with grades on his mind. His pressure is subtle, nothing to put two gloves on; he says he is merely conveying the 'concern' of some student, he wants to be 'assured' that quizzes are 'merely diagnostic,' he asks how some student is doing, relates 'her father called me,' etc. What he never tells a student is "See your teacher first. Ask him." Recently however, the Chairman saw I wasn't 'getting the point,' and simply blurted out 'The Departmental pattern in a course of this size [50 students] is no more than 2 Fs and 3 or 4 Ds.' This was a fact this positivist thought would be valuable to me. A teacher with a reputation for being a tough grader has just written me a sympathetic letter, in which he explains how he achieves the departmental pattern, by never asking a question a committee would not come up with and never giving lectures that the students have to attend to pass the course. Late at night a

young teacher told me how he survived his first year; when he heard students were going to do him in on the evaluations, he called them up and begged them not to. All this has official backing. Here any teacher who gives an F or a D must report in detail the reasons why to the administration; they have a regular form for it. Students know it.” He enclosed a copy.

With so much going for the malingering student at this college, in the way of “support” from the institution, I suggested to my friend that no adult plagiarist could make a living in this college town, with so much competition from the college itself. His next letter agreed: “The College has ‘Peer-tutoring.’ They pay older students to work on other student’s papers. The placard invites any student with a writing assignment to come over and they will, ‘brainstorm ideas, talk through a draft, revise, and polish it.’ When I asked an old hand here, respected by good students, how a teacher can distinguish what is your student’s work on such a paper and what is the paid tutor’s, he said, ‘Wouldn’t you work on your own student’s first draft if they brought it to you?’ I asked him how the student could then sign the honor oath, which says ‘I have neither received nor given aid on this paper.’ He looked pained and has avoided me since. When I discovered a senior who had never written her papers without ‘peer-tutoring’ help, who then failed the paper as well as the hour exam, the Chairman gave her a drop from the course, the night before the final, behind my back. I got wind of this later and protested. To no avail. Students tell me she is now living with the dean of the college. I wonder how soon they will have ‘peer testers’ who ‘brainstorm, coach, revise, and polish’ other student’s exams as they are writing them?” he concluded.

I didn’t hear from either friend for a long while, and decided I better write: “No doubt you feel lonely. You may wonder if you should persist in holding to the standards you’ve described to your students. You may have been approached by someone suggesting it is harsh to do so. Or someone suggesting a little lying does a little harm, and can gain you oh so much. Do not believe them. Whatever is genuinely studious in your students does not want to be lied to. You can’t invite them to inquire after truth, while you tell them untruth about themselves. Teaching is a calling. You are called to pursue the truth you don’t know and to say the truth you do. Consider also that your better students will see what you are doing in a flash. Far worse, I know, you will see it before them and live with it after. You are more important than any advantage you might gain in staying. The standards of attendance, attention, and competence you announced are a minimal. It is a college’s shame when it will not adhere to such a minimum, not yours. No teacher could be proud to belong to a place that aims to satisfy, not educate, students and, to that end, will corrupt young teachers such as yourself.”

Time passed with no word. It was midwinter when bad news arrived from both teachers. At both schools a band of students aggrieved at their hour exam scores, were encouraged by deans to work harder—at complaining, to the

deans—which complaining the deans then took as the pretext for severely curtailing my friends' spring classes, including cancelling one with uncomplaining veterans. An enclosed newspaper article reported an aggrieved student exulting, "This shows this college will not tolerate professors students are not happy with," and the eviction of the teacher, from office and department.

What do these two reports add up to? But this: in the American University since 1968, the lowest desires of students count for more than the reason of the teachers. Differences between colleges matter only slightly. At an old private college, the lowest desires of the students seem to have been gratified, much as they are at a new state college, but through pressure on the teachers, so as not to mar the college's prestige, thus its transcript, which together with self-esteem is what they are selling. If "We get 'em through," is the pride of the cheap state college, "we get 'em through and make 'em feel good" is the pride of the old private college. I suppose that you do get more for your money at the pricey school (\$20,000 a year), but at neither is the student being offered education.

However, one important thing may be better at a state school. Just before the crash, my literature friend reported she had been invited to Chinese dinner by two older teachers, at which they wondered if she was grading too hard and stressed that natural right was changeable, a proposition she agreed with (once she understood it to mean you don't expect an over-forty man to start getting in shape by running even ten-minute miles), adding she was quite willing to reward progress and even effort without progress, but not willing to pass students who cannot remember who Alcibiades is and who also cannot write a paragraph. When she said that, her colleagues decided to back her. The story was not so good at the prestige college. There, my political science friend reported that a fellow teacher had assured him, "They had a right, an obligation, to try to satisfy themselves that the spring semester would not generate the same number and kind of complaints." "Who did the generating? Who but the credulous gossips, a pressuring chairman, and conspiring deans! And what about the good students, all satisfied veterans, who signed up to study more Plato in the spring," my disappointed friend finished.

Two conclusions follow from these reports. Since for a real teacher, for a soul with long longing, the University today is a kind of prison, the quality of the fellowship in your cell makes an important difference. And at a state school some lingering sense of the fellowship of teachers may survive in the labor union.

Of course, about these reports, I must say "I suppose." No one not there can vouch for the truth of a report. However, I think these true. First, I have never met a teacher in the University today who taught before 1968 who did not say that students are less capable now than before.³⁸ Is it not true that twenty-five years ago students entering college wrote better than students leaving college today? Second, I have never met a teacher who taught before 1968 who did not

acknowledge that there has been massive grade inflation over the last twenty-five years. Massive effects have massive causes; thousands of decisions by thousands of teachers, day in and day out, year after year, all tending in one direction, and all with one simple cause: the University no longer believes its mission is to teach. Third, uncontested reports reach one monthly from the Universities of guests prevented from speaking by rowdy students and weak authorities. Considering the treatment Henry Kissinger or Jeane Kirkpatrick now get, I find it easy to imagine how, if they were young teachers starting out today, they would be treated, by anonymous students, supine chairmen, and righteous deans. The students are not very capable, the University is not much interested in teaching them, and has, accordingly, made them the judge of their teachers.

The reports I passed on above are what are called “horror stories.” They are repulsive; you can easily detect the indignation and the strain, and infer the nausea and shame, that my reporters suffered. And they are tedious; I myself could hardly call them foreign. Every serious teacher in the University today knows his or her own horror stories—not only Allan Bloom and what he witnessed and what, reading between his reticent lines, you suspect he endured (threats on his life for example—which is probably not what he suffered from most).³⁹ Why do such stories repel us? A philosopher might say, with Aristotle, “Anger is the passion closest to reason,” and mean he should never feel it. Certainly it is true, as the statesman Plutarch says, “The consequences of anger are almost always worse than the causes.” Nevertheless, as Socrates stresses (*Republic* 439e), spiritedness sometimes supports reason, and if the good is to be protected, it must needs have warriors to fight for it.

Moreover, I suspect the reasons we find these stories repulsive are otherwise. The Last Man in us, the man without purpose, finds all passions distracting from his pleasures. If treated to a story that touches his sense of justice and calls for doing something just, the moral coward will respond, “I hope you weren’t upset,” advise “To get along, go along,” and whisper “What me worry.” Professors in the University have been saying such things for quite some time now, and the horror story Bloom’s book tells cannot but make them aware of their complicity in the University’s destruction. Had the horror story of Cornell or the other takeovers been appreciated at the time, as a horror story, by the professors, the University would not be in such a state now.

Aside from this fortitude, the stories my reporters told are stories of general decline and personal defeat, but one they told was a small victory, revealing much, and so worth retelling. “The other day a sub-Dean called, ‘Are you planning to have a class on the *Republic* on Sunday?’ ‘Yes.’ DEAN: ‘Why?’ Me: ‘It’s optional. It’s for those who read the book. When I discovered how very few had read it, I told the class to concentrate on the other assigned works. There will be nothing on it on the final.’ DEAN: ‘The students don’t believe that.’ Me: ‘Well, that shows you free will, doesn’t it?’ DEAN: ‘Isn’t it

true that those who come to the class on Sunday might have an advantage over the others?’ Me: ‘Well, I guess they might; the *Republic* has much to teach us, about education, the soul, of the student, of the teacher, and about the regime. That might help in a general way. But what do you intend to do? Do you intend to prevent students from using the library too much, those who do surely have a general advantage over others? And what about those who reread the book? Do you propose to prevent them? Or punish them?’ DEAN: ‘Well, I’m going to order you not to meet those students.’ Me: ‘I am a visitor here. I am not here to change things. So, if you are the duly constituted authority, I shall obey your order. But I think politeness requires me to go on Sunday to meet whoever shows up, to tell them that we’re not meeting, and if they ask ‘Why?’ to report that you ordered us not to meet.’ There was a short pause, and the DEAN responded: ‘Oh, I guess I’ll let you meet.’ Only the fear of students in her office persuaded her to let those few students who had read the *Republic* and wanted to talk about it meet with me.”

Did my friend exaggerate? I do not believe so. What this teacher described could have happened only at this time and only at one of our American universities. Everything that “openness” means, what passion it is rooted in, what vices it plants, what infamies it sanctions, and what virtues it hinders is evident in that dialogue. It was a small victory in the war of our times.

Hindering evil is not the same as enjoying the good, and I would not have you believe that these teachers taught without witnessing victories that have nothing to do with our times. One enclosed a copy of a letter from a student, written after the final:

I realize now what you have been trying to do this semester, although for us it was very painful, and we fought you the whole way. Rather than trying to impart knowledge through instruction, you sought to impart it through discovery on our own. Discovery on our own makes it richer than if it were simply given to us. If I learned nothing else this semester (although I *did*), I think this was the most important: knowledge through discovery. Like Socrates, you tried to guide us to the truth rather than telling us *your* idea of it. You wanted us to discover on our own. Thank you.

Enclosed also was a copy of the letter this teacher sent in reply:

Thanks very much for your “surprise” which I just noticed. Although I never noticed in you the “fight” you speak of, I noticed what you are talking about. In students the inclination to resist learning is to be expected. It is in all of us. The temptation to fight whoever is asking us is always there, too. To see some one give in to it is disappointing, but no more. One cannot say the same for those who encourage it in others.

A letter such as yours is apt to keep a teacher going quite a long while. Your

mention of Socrates is pleasing, but untrue. Socrates never needed encouragement, but I do, and I thank you very much.

Finally, I can report that both teachers are still teaching.⁴⁰

VI. THE OPEN UNIVERSITY AND THE WAR OF OUR TIMES

However true, these vivid details and anecdotes describe only the leaves on the blighted tree of knowledge today; individually, they are vexatious; in their multitude, they are poisonous, but they are not branches, let alone the roots. These teachers report the vivid facts, they feel that they go together, they may sense there are roots, but they do not know the branches that hold all the leaves in place, the trunk that supports them, the secret paths by which the sap nourishes them or the roots that send up that sap. These teachers have either not studied Aristotle or Plato or Tocqueville sufficiently or having done so, have not then looked around at what is in front of them, as Bloom has. Thus, they do not appreciate how the different regimes hold human communities together through their form, how they shape the manners and morals of the community, affecting individuals however virtuous, and express the community's deepest convictions about the whole. When bad men combine, the good must think long about what holds the combination of the bad together.

At first sight it seems that the present-day University has no regime at all. Certainly it has no unity, not even a center; there is no Uni, it is all versity. The competition of all departments with all departments and of all teachers against all others is the reality. It could be a high contest, a contest for the best students, and therefore a contest to bring the best out of them. It is, in fact, a low, Hobbesian war; in it the winner is he or she who pleases the most students, not the one who strives to teach the best students, so they become even better, and educates the others, so they will too. Such teachers exist, without in any way changing the stupefying general scene. Over both teachers and students, playing one against the other, are the administrators, most of whom long ago left the classroom, without regret. Thus, without unity, without a center, the University soon comes to be ruled by the lowest desires of the students more than the judgment of the teachers.

A generation ago a foreign visitor to America reported, "It is the only country in the world where the parents obey the children." Now today we have the only colleges in the world where the teachers fear the opinions of the students more than the students respect the judgments of the teachers. The spread of the elective system over the whole curriculum meant that the college expected to learn from the students what to teach; this, together with the abolition of many requirements, resulted in a curriculum shaped by distracting anxieties about jobs, ephemeral excitements, and indignant concerns about remote injustices, as represented by the media. Likewise, the post-1968 innovation of "student evaluations" means that the teacher is expected to learn from the students how

to teach, what assignments to make, what standards to demand, how to make students feel good, and below all, how to grade them. The “self-graded” courses that sprang up in the late sixties are now frowned upon—now that the standards by which all students in all courses are graded are set by the lowest desires of the students, the desire for a good transcript and a good feeling about themselves.

The old relation of teacher and student was a covenant; the teacher, more advanced in knowledge, in the ways of study, and even in wisdom, took it as a calling to help the less advanced. The teacher may have felt the desire to be loved by the student, the attraction of popularity, and the temptation to entertain, but resisted or subordinated these to his self-respecting desire to do right by his calling, by his subject and his discipline, and to seek only a thanks he deserved, sometimes years later, from the student. The student submitted to the authority of the teacher and the school; he was there to learn something from both; his tuition paid for the privilege of attending, not the transcript his efforts and consequent achievements had not justified; and if he didn't like the college, he was free to go elsewhere, to another college, or to sea, or west. It was no contract. The parties were not supposed equal.

The chief instrument of this change in the relation of teacher and student is the “student evaluation.” Almost all are anonymous, and some are even coerced; at one college, students may not register for classes the next term unless they have turned them in. It is easy to see how they might be used to settle grudges; indeed the only correlation that has ever been demonstrated in them is a function of grade-expectation.⁴¹ Apart from the invitation they give to revenge, they make the less formed, less educated, less virtuous the judges of the better. Such forms strike at the heart of education. With one stroke, they deny the fundamental distinction between the student and the teacher, and they express contempt for its highest goal, truth. The standards by which an institution devoted to higher learning ascertains any truth ought to be higher than the market place, higher than the polity, and even higher than the court, not lower.

These forms do teach something, and if carried into the polity, they will change many cherished things. Our Fifth Amendment protects us from trials without due process; our Sixth Amendment allows no witness to testify against us without confronting us; no American court allows a witness against us to escape crossquestioning; or admits hearsay evidence at all, and all decent people ignore the anonymous hearsay on bathroom walls; yet it is precisely such anonymous, unopposed, uncross-questioned, unexamined hearsay that American colleges solicit through such “student evaluation” forms. I believe that the most notable other institutions in our time to pass laws coercing and encouraging calumny, including children against their parents, are the Soviet and Chinese regimes.

Machiavelli says the first law of a republic is a law against calumny, one requiring anyone badmouthing another either to make a public accusation, ready to suffer the proposed punishment if the charge proves untrue, or to shut

up (*Discourses*, I, 7). And Thomas shows how all the forms of calumny (vilification, backbiting, tale-bearing, and derision) fail to promote the good of the person or the community, by going to the person we find error in and speaking with him first before we speak to others, and by refusing to listen to anyone who does not do the same (*Summa Theologiae*, II, II, Q. 72–76). What such usually opposed minds agree on might, together with our Constitution, be worth considering.

At the present-day University, a young teacher must then again and again find himself or herself asking, “Should I teach this hard book? Should I give this hard test? Should I mark off for writing? Should I turn in these plagiarizing students?” Again and again, departments will find themselves asking, “Dare we require of majors what we really think they should study? Dare we have a senior project? Dare we have a final comprehensive exam?” It is very hard to educate people you have reason to fear; it is often possible to please them; and where the rewards for flattering them are great, it will be hard not to. “Yes, I will corrupt my students” will seem justified, or at least excused, by “I want to survive.” It is already true that some teachers go to students about to badmouth them on the evaluations and beg them not to. The time is soon coming when groups of students will blackmail young teachers, threatening ruin on “evaluations,” if they don’t get the grades they want or other things. Then teaching will be impossible and “teaching” will be intolerable without self-deception. “To do this deed, I must not know myself,” as Macbeth says.

The reversal of the relation of teacher and student in the American college is a consequence of a revolution in the regime. Colleges are now run like commercial corporations, with a CEO and a board, with employees, seeking customers through advertising, and offering diverse products and services. Colleges are run like these corporations because they think of themselves as commercial corporations. Education is now understood to be a business. The rulers of the present-day University consider “students” and their parents consumers to be lured by smooth words and images; the relation is contractual, as between buyer and seller, an exchange relation of equals, not convenantal, a relation of unequals, measured by a standard above both, truth, virtue, or wisdom. Parents and students have paid for a product, namely a good transcript from a prestigious school and have also paid for a service, the good feeling, call it “wellness,” or “self-esteem,” or “satisfaction,” that goes with this product. Thus the rulers of this institution conceive it to be their duty to pressure the teachers, as a large department store would its clerks or a restaurant might its waitresses, to please the customer. Twenty-five years of thinking of education as a business has rendered the graduates of colleges so unskilled, for example in writing, that even businesses, who must hire them, are now alarmed.

It used to be that the real corporation of the University was the faculty. The first universities were a guild of teachers; even when the legal corporation began to reside in nonresident, nonteaching trustees, the faculty still governed the

campus, set the standards, and chose the curriculum. Now most teachers at the University have become mere employees, an increasing number of them part time, adjunct, or apprentice (graduate students). Inroads upon tenure abound: ten-year reviews, merit raises, plus the device of withholding raises from critics of the administration; “dead wood” is the excuse, despotism the ready woodsman; in ten years the forever oak forest of tenure will be gone. Even where tenure still exists, the faculty does not rule. Sometimes they can regain some of the things they lost as a guild by forming a labor union, but not the vital center; fringe benefits, a better dental policy, yes, but not the duties of governing the institution, of determining what knowledge is most worth teaching, and of choosing who is admitted to studies. Few faculties have Senates with sufficient legislative powers; some do not have their own moderator; very, very few elect their own Dean of Faculty. As someone surveying the course of the aristocracy in France from Louis XIV to the Revolution said, “Aristocracies go from fulfilling duties, to having privileges, to clinging to vanities.”

The change is evident at the top, too. Now University presidents are seldom chosen from the faculty, or if they are, it is no loss to students. It is a long time since knowledge in a college president counted, in the public world, in his or her selection, or with the board; many presidents would not be qualified to teach in any department in the institution they preside over; most college presidents today not only do not teach, as some once did a generation ago,⁴² but cannot be imagined in a classroom; few write books, those they do write seldom deserve reading, let alone rereading; many are probably not readers of books, let alone rereaders of great ones. Currently the only college presidents I know of whose speeches on education matter, are John Silber, George Roche, Ron McArthur, Peter Diamondopoulos, and John Agresto.⁴³ Deans whom you could talk to about teaching are as few.⁴⁴

I had the good fortune to teach in one of these colleges in the old style, one founded by rereaders of great books. While leading the University of Dallas, serving as dual-presidents, Dr. Louise and Dr. Donald Cowan, wife and husband, literary critic and physicist, taught full time, Russian Novel and Physics, and much else. It was a Platonic founding, with the best teachers the rulers. From nothing in the early sixties, this small university rose to the second forty in America, according to Barron's rough *Guide*. In truth, it was better than its SAT profile; at Dartmouth the best students said they felt out of place; at Dallas, the best students were looked up to, without envy, and in turn they looked out for the others. Once in a class, during a pause in the inquiry, one student spoke for the rest, “Janet, we see you are thinking, tell us what you are thinking.” Students used to ask for extra classes and hold more themselves. All this was achieved by keeping the language requirement, which my alma mater, Harvard, and others were busy dropping, and by instituting a core curriculum for the first two years, while Harvard was “diversifying” General Education. Good students felt they had discovered the place for them, told the news to

their younger brothers, sisters, and friends, and to all visitors. Grateful recent graduates, running admissions, were given one maxim, "Find people like yourselves." A competitive examination for full four-year scholarships based on merit only reached others; and the faculty deliberated on whom to admit. By 1981 the freshman class had swelled to 324. There teachers talked happily with each other, about their teaching, about their discoveries, and about their students. At a good school that is what teachers talk about. At a declining school, they talk about "the state of the place," and when the decline is perfected, they talk only of fringe benefits.⁴⁵

There were once quite a few colleges in the West like the one I have described, and many with parts of its virtue; I benefited from three, Harvard, Oxford, and Yale. At Harvard, the General Education Program, the Tutorials, and the Residential House system, where you could dine regularly with your Tutor, often just listening to him and his friends talk, provided a conviviality without which the larger classes and Departmentalized curriculum might have stifled inquiry. When I returned to lecture there, a few years after 1968, I noticed, sitting once again in the Adams House dining hall, that there were no tutors and students dining together. When I contrasted this with my experience, my student hosts remarked, "You were here in those years." I know of no more telling sign of decline in a community devoted to inquiry and teaching that the decline in conversation.

The cause of the revolution that has destroyed these colleges is intellectual. The statements of purpose and declarations of mission that once stood above the college, measuring its activities as a standard and animating all, students and teachers, as a goal, are now written by the public relations department. Where once the college seals said "Truth," "Light," "Science," "Knowledge" "Virtue," and "God," they will soon read "Wellness," "Self-esteem," "Satisfaction," "Concern," "Affirmation," and "Openness." The old mottoes encouraged everyone in the University, faculty and students alike, to set out on the long journey to know the truth, form yourself according to it, and shun error. Now the mottoes promise satisfaction to everyone who will give up those aspirations, and, although they bear the new motto "Openness," these universities will not look kindly on those who do not give up the standards those aspirations bind one to.

Although Mr. Bloom says very little in Part Three about the changes in customs, habits, rules, the frauds, the compromises, the daily indignities, that have sprung up in the universities revolutionized since he first taught in them, none of them can be unknown to him. He who strikes *the* roots knows where most of the branches are. Retail corruption is not the same as wholesale nihilism, but it is mightily encouraged by it. The universities Mr. Bloom speaks of are now awash in the indifference to important truth that calls itself "openness." As Bloom maintains, "openness" is a great emptiness. It is a sham virtue; an inquiring man will be tolerant, not open. The difference is in the character of the soul, its purposes. The empty relativist says "I am open" because he does

not believe there is truth, does not want to take the trouble to find it, and does not want to be measured by it. The inquiring soul is tolerant, because knowing that he is not wise, he wants to encounter the best critique of his favorite conclusions. If he does not find it, he will try to invent it. His perception that he does not have wisdom is not to be confused with the Relativist's claim "There is none." Just because one might acknowledge that it is hard to decide between the claims of say, Plato and Nietzsche, Buddhism and Christianity, Homer and Shakespeare, Rembrandt and van Gogh, does not mean one must declare it impossible to decide between all of them and the claims of Thor comic books. The fact that the search for the most elevated and fundamental truths is long, that many of our superiors in heart and mind do not agree with each other about their findings, does not excuse us either from searching ourselves or acknowledging the bounty of truths in front of us.

The Relativist says, "We know all the truths men have ever held self-evident are equally untrue, all things they have ever valued are equally valueless, all the standard equally unmeasuring, and all the purposes equally unstimulating." If content with that, they call it a virtue, namely openness, and if cunning, they assert it to avoid giving reasons for their desires and hearing criticisms of their ambitions. More passionate, the Nihilist "says of the world as it is, that it better were not, and with regard to the world as it should be, that it does not and cannot exist."⁴⁶ If such a nihilist should reflect on his pleasure in sheer thinking, he would lose his passion and become an Epicurean. And if he should prolong his rage, he would become a Militant Nihilist, and declare, "The world as it is were better not, the world as it best could be is not, and I will make both so. I will destroy the world and the true world."

Mr. Bloom's "nice" students could turn nasty quickly. These open-minded students might well, taught by misologists to despise reason, become fierce, violent, and destructive. Then we might see them on the campuses of America dress for combat, start marching, and chant "Logos must go." Between the denial of the mind that is taking over the University and the militant ignorance of it that the Skinheads live, there is a link of self-hatred. For a man to despise reason, to rant against logos, is to hate himself. Whether you understand it as Paris did in the thirteenth century, as the Enlightenment re-understood it later, or as Allan Bloom experienced it as an eager freshman at Chicago in the middle of our century—and however it was always, being human, diluted by unreason—the University is the institution ruled by reason, its ways, its habits, its solitude, its conviviality, its standards, and its purposes. Although the creation of the West, the University is the inheritance of man as man. Where men do not want to be men, where they despise reason, it cannot survive. The Nastiest Teachers might soon fill the Last Students with the spirit of revenge, and close the University.⁴⁷ Openness is the virtue of the Last Man, and Deconstruction the philosophy of the Ugliest Man. They may soon rule the world, in order to annihilate it.

The most striking thesis in this part of Bloom's book foresees this calamity.

According to Mr. Bloom, the sham “openness” and real Will that has triumphed in the University emanate from a likely vulgarization of Nietzsche encouraged by Heidegger and advanced by Derrida. Heidegger’s support of the Nazi movement at Freiburg in 1933 is analogous to events at Cornell in 1969. In both; the reason of those in authority at the University was replaced by the will of the least reasonable outside it and in it. If the daily corruption of the University since 1968 reads like a bad novel, and the change of vote at Cornell was a farce, then Heidegger’s Rectoral address’s healing of Nazi and student power was a tragedy. Put the tenured intellectuals of today together with the images on MTV and set it to rap music and you can see the Nazi past as our future.⁴⁸

Unfortunately this thesis, but slenderly supported and casually advanced in the book, has only gained evidence since. There is, first of all, the tone of the reviews of Bloom’s book by University teachers. The first set of reviews, by journalists, praised it and said “Read it,” which was sensible. One expected the criticism to come later, from the academics; one wanted it, but it never arrived. Vilification, insinuation, name-calling, strong reassertions of conviction, expressions of distaste, bogus expressions of proximity (‘Although Bloom was my teacher, I have to say . . .’—from a former C + student), pretentious comparisons with Aristotle (‘Although Allan is my friend, I must choose truth.’), exclamations of horror, and gobs of ill disguised envy (Bloom might well be forgiven for sighing, “You never know who your friends are until you’re up and in.”)—in the academic reviews there has been everything but criticism; the best have been answers to the vilifiers and detractors.⁴⁹ Second, the curricular changes at Stanford, where a great books course was curtailed in the face of the current rages, summarized in the chant in the streets, “Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western Culture’s got to go,” by a mob led by Jesse Jackson.⁵⁰ One may doubt whether changes supported by marches (and the threats they implicitly contain) and such chants (and the hatred they express) are likely to encourage the spirit of high inquiry. A paper by two good young teachers in the old program read at the APSA (S.F.) suggests that the public discussion convinced some of their “minority” students to disavow their own happy experiences of the program. Third, there is the corollary story of the Nazi past of a leading deconstructionist, Paul de Man, and the apologetic interpretations his fellow deconstructionists, especially their leader Jacques Derrida, have offered of their friend’s Nazi collaboration and subsequent career-long deception of students, public, and friends.⁵¹ Unnamed, Professor de Man already appears in Bloom’s account of the Cornell revolution. All of this tends to support Bloom’s contention that, morally and politically speaking, there is very little to distinguish the German Professoriat’s collaboration in the destruction of the University by the Nazis and the American Professoriat’s collaboration in the destruction of the University by student desires and radical hatreds. It will be interesting to see what Mr. Bloom writes about all that has followed his book.

Intellectual clarity about the war of our times is indispensable. It is important to know that what you are in is a war, to know what that war is about, and to recognize your enemies, but to win you must also associate with fellow warriors. "When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle" (Burke).⁵²

VII. OUR LAST BEST HOPE, MAYBE

The single, explicit recommendation in the whole of Mr. Bloom's book is that University students be allowed to read some great books. If heeded, by those who rule the universities, this will make a decisive difference. Plant the good seed and you will have the good tree soon enough, roots, trunk, branches, and leaves. Students who come to enjoy the life of inquiry in a great books class will meet far greater teachers than even Mr. Bloom. In the authors of the great books, they will find the teachers who not only encourage desire for Truth, respect for Nature, and reverence for God, but in some important measure satisfy the soul's longing for truth. It is impossible to imagine such a great books curriculum without the Bible, *War and Peace*, and Thomas Aquinas, as well as Mr. Bloom's favorites, Plato, Rousseau, and Nietzsche. The fact that such programs always have great books that disagree with each other, not heatedly and trivially, but profoundly and reasonably, means that reason is the umpire, the soul the hero, and insight the reward.

It is also hard to imagine it without some attention to the Framers of America, to their just Declaration, their well-built Constitution, and to the great Rededicator, Lincoln. Mr. Bloom understands something important about America. For Americans great books are required reading. Our nation is what it is because it is founded on truth, on "nature" and on "nature's God," as the Declaration declares; our principles are, in principle, the principles of man as man, everywhere he is to be found. Hence, the appeal to their self-evidence in our Declaration, the assumption of them in our Constitution, the Civil War fought for their rededication, and the national prosperity that flowed from them. All four are unprecedented. There had never been a rebellion that appealed to nature and nature's god; there had never been a written constitution founded on nature and reason; never such protection of public deliberation and choice in worship (as in our First Amendment), and never a civil war dedicated to a proposition of natural right.⁵³

Do the great books have consequences? You bet. Until the inquiries of Socrates could be preserved in writing by Plato, there could be no somewhat secure possession of the discovery of political philosophy, the discovery that human things are best ordered and sufficiently understood by a power everywhere the same and everywhere available to the human mind, not by convention, and not by claimed revelation, but by intellect and the nature it arises from and from

which it takes its light. One long consequence of this discovery, preserved in the great books of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas, and others, is the United States of America.

Nietzsche said that the war of the next century, our century, would be for the rule of the planet, and so it has been. Our World Wars and our “peaces” in between are part of one long war to see who shall rule the world. Who do we want to win? What Imperial Germany did to Belgium at first and to all shipping later, it would have done to the world, had it won. The ideas espoused by Nazi Germany, race and will, had nothing in them that should or might appeal to impartial others. Likewise, Imperial Japan, which already had the “*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*” Hitler hoped to found.⁵⁴ None of these had an idea worth fighting for or surrendering to. Only three polities in this century have had ideas upon which the rule of the world might be based: the British Empire, with its idea of civilization and self-government, the Soviet Empire, with its idea of future freedom, and the United States of America, with its Declaration. The British Empire has disappeared, in no small part because England listened to arguments that the colonies were ready to practice its ideas. Lately the Soviet Empire seems to be disappearing because Communists themselves have concluded that the tyrannies inherent in the idea of socialism neither advance humanity toward future contentedness, nor compensate for present Gulag misery. That leaves the United States, the one nation on earth, formed by an idea, that, either through imitation or by federal incorporation, might rule the world. Is it worthy?

The idea of America is announced in the Declaration, framed in the Constitution, rededicated in the Civil War, and hearkened to since. If you compare the United States with ancient Athens or Renaissance Florence, let alone the best regime discussed by the ancient philosophers or by Christ, you may well find it inferior in splendor, nobility and beauty, and in goodness, but not, I think, without some of each. If you compare the United States with the ancient Rome or Sparta, you will find it less stable and less enduring, but not, I think, without some chance to match them. However, if you compare the United States with its chief rivals in this century, you must grant that it has been the cause of decent, or more decent, government everywhere. And that means that its departure from its idea, of nature and nature’s god, might render the world miserable. It would be truly terrible if at the time that Communism loses the Cold War, so does the West, by being conquered by the idea of the will, by the practices of socialist pity, and by the idea of race and nation. Today the West is not only threatened by the end of history and the Last Man, but by the continuation of history and the militant Nihilist who aims to write it.

Thus America, the leader of the West, is of all the nations on earth today the most in need of philosophy.⁵⁵ Our nation is the only one founded on abstract, universal principles; it is the only one where one becomes a citizen by learning principles. Those principles appeal to reason and they require reason in the

citizenry. Nations are destroyed from within by whatever destroys their foundation; ours being in Truth, in Nature and in Nature's God, whatever destroys the soul's thirst for truth, its respect for nature, and its reverence for God, will destroy it. In describing the consequences of not thirsting for the truth, not respecting nature, and not revering God, Allan Bloom has served students, parents, and his fellow teachers well, and by so doing, he has also served America well. How Higher Education has impoverished the souls of its students, hindered its best teachers, and thereby endangered the West is another title for Mr. Bloom's book.

The Closing of the American Mind asks its readers whether there can long be souls without longing, families without homes, homes without reverence, teachers without a teaching, universities without reason, and a nation without universities. The answer is as evident to the mind, as the stakes are high, the stakes noble, and the response of American minds as yet uncertain. In hardback the book has been bought by parents, who like it, mostly, and by University teachers, who detest it, mostly. Now that it is in paperback, it will be bought by young people, the children of the parents and the students of the teachers.

NOTES

1. Lynn V. Cheney's National Endowment Report, *American Memory*, notes that, "Between 1960 and 1984, while the number of teachers grew by 57 percent and the number of principals and supervisors by 79 percent, the number of other staffers, from curriculum specialists to supervisors of instruction, was up by almost 500 percent" (p. 25) and concludes, not unreasonably, that since 1960 the American high school has ceased to think teaching matters of substance its mission. Evidence of the same rise in non-teachers at the University, reported in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (28 March 1990) argue the same abandonment of teaching and may account for the rise in the cost of colleges, far above inflation; between 1975 and 1985, the number of non-teachers employed by colleges and universities rose 41.6 percent, while teachers rose 5.9 percent; by 1985 teachers made up only a third of all those employed.

2. Judging from reviews, even those favorable to the book do not agree with Bloom's criticism of rock music, and, judging from conversations, even friends have not been persuaded. No public meltdown of their electric guitars and Stones records by former Bloom students has been reported, and after praising the book, William Bennett continued, I am told, to answer rock trivia questions in his limousine on the way to the Department of Education. My essay, "A Different Drummer," gives support and offers one criticism: the savagery of rock has more to do with *thumos* than *eros*.

3. That the order of topics in John Senior's *The Restoration of Christian Culture* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983) is like Bloom's allows the reader to marvel at the agreement of reason and revelation. In the Integrated Humanities Program that flourished as the Pearson College at Kansas State (in Lawrence) under the founding supervision of Mr. Senior, Mr. Dennis Quinn, and others, we have a model of such an elementary "musical" education as today's orphans need. There the students learned to read aloud, write legible, pleasing script, and waltz gracefully, along with reading Dante and Plutarch and Plato. Plato would approve.

4. Although Bloom has much to say about how various 'rights' movements on campus hinder souls in longing, he says little about the homosexual rights movement, I suppose because his criticisms of the others cover it; while you are thinking about your rights, it will be hard to recall your duties, for example to study, if you are a student. To immoralist Gide, Bloom says: while you are thinking about petty pleasures like sex, you will not be sublime; for that you have to sublimate

(p. 232). For Nietzsche's thoughts on feminism, mutatis mutandis on homosexuality, see "Nature, Woman, and Nietzsche," *Maieutics*, No. 2: Winter 1981, pp. 27–42.

5. The best treatment I know of the plight of young people, orphaned or not, is by Walter Trobisch, *Living With Unfulfilled Desires* (Madison: Intervarsity, 1979); these letters from young people and the answers by Mr. and Mrs. Trobisch are also available in the recent *Complete Works* (Madison: Intervarsity, 1987). For both advice to the home-schooling family and a defense of the family, see the works of Mary Pride, including *The Way Home*, *All the Way Home*, *The Big Book of Home Learning*, *Schoolproof*, and the warning, *The Child Abuse Industry*.

6. See *Shakespeare's Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 1964); the book includes an essay by Harry V. Jaffa on *King Lear* with suitable acknowledgement on the title page and a shared dedication "To Leo Strauss our teacher."

7. See Bloom's essay on *Richard II* in *Shakespeare as Political Thinker* ed. Alvis and West (Durham: Caroline Academic Press, 1981), pp. 51–62.

8. See the middle of "Nature and the Order of Rank (according to Nietzsche)," listed below.

9. If a somewhat different stance, for when Bloom writes of Plato and Rousseau, you know he has learned from them, and when he writes of Shakespeare, you know he has learned from Plato and from Machiavelli.

10. "Nietzsche on Flaubert and the Powerlessness of his Art," *Centennial Review*, II (3): Summer 1976, pp. 309–13.

11. In his life Strauss seems to have found only one exception to this rule: Willmore Kendall, who upon reading Strauss on Locke dismissed his own account as a 'trivial fond record' and sought Strauss's friendship.

12. I ask Plato's forgiveness that it is not more indebted.

13. See, for example, footnote 2 to the "Introduction" to his *Philosophie und Gesetz* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1935).

14. Or as my friend Roger Masters once suggested, "What this country needs is a good Depression."

15. *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra* trans. Eva T. H. Brann (M. I. T. Press, 1968) and the work of Kurt Riezler; Michael B. Foster; C. S. Lewis; Charles De Koninick; Vincent Smith; Adolph Portmann; Stanley Jaki; Hans Jonas; and lately David Lachterman, together with the on-going preservation of the mathematical tradition at St. John's College, these fifty and more years.

16. See "Leo Strauss: Three Quarrels, Three Questions, One Life," in *The Crisis of Liberal Democracy: A Straussian Perspective* [Corrected Edition], eds. Kenneth L. Deutsch & Walter Soffer (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1987), pp. 17–28; the uncorrected edition has about 1200 errors.

17. See "Would Human Life Be Better Without Death?" *Soundings*, LXIII (3): Fall 1980, pp. 321–38.

18. The current alliance of the lesbians and homosexuals need not last; while the womb is still needed, the lesbians need far less from one male, than the homosexuals need from many women, in order to propagate those they can raise up into their own unkind. On the complex connections between the modern scientific project and the University, see C. S. Lewis' *Abolition of Man* and its narrative counterpart, *That Hideous Strength*, wonderful for its perception of the snug dovetailing between little evil and big, academic manners and devilish designs, small cogs and big wheels.

19. Admitting that, as Washington affirmed (in 1783), America is built on a new understanding of the rights of man, or what Publius Hamilton calls a new science of politics (*Federalist*, 9), and hence on a new relation of rights and duties, did the Founders perceive the knavishness of Locke? And if they did not, were they his fools, or did they simply take the good and ignore the evil? And when Americans think back to their foundation in the state of nature, do they become poor timorous Hobbeses, or cautious cupidinous Lockes, or, as often, brave, virtuous Virginians and Lone Rangers, ready to protect life and property from designing Machiavels?

20. The usual "Superman" or "Overman" translate Nietzsche's *Übermensch* poorly, I think; the former because the subsequent Comic Book has expunged its nobility; the latter because it sounds high-minded, empty, and static. Since the *Übermensch* is over, above, and beyond man, man so

far, only by being one who ever surpasses himself, I prefer the word “surpassing”; it and its elided version “passing” belong to the treasury of Shakespearean English: “much surpassing the common praise it bears,” “passing fair,” and “passing strange” (*Winter’s Tale*, 3.1.2; *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.1.234; *Othello*, 1.3.160).

21. “What Does Zarathustra Whisper In Life’s Ear?” *Nietzsche Studien*, Band XVII: 1988, pp. 179–94.

22. On the ladder, see my “Nature and the Order of Rank,” *Journal of Value Inquiry*, XXII: 1988 pp. 147–65; and my attempt at well-tempered, “Nietzsche and the Consequences.”

23. Much more could be said about the abuse of Nietzsche by the Left. The grossness of it shows in its use of the nonbook *Will to Power*, a fraud which Nietzsche’s sister published from materials left after he disappeared into madness, materials some of which he asked the landlord at Sils Maria to destroy and the rest of which he had not the leisure either to destroy or to perfect, into a beautiful order, a book, as he did everything else he published. The fraud is well known, ignored by the Leftists Bloom mentions, and acquiesced to by many North American Nietzsche scholars. (See Mazzino Montinari, “Nietzsches Nachlass von 1885 bis 1888 oder Textkritik und Wille zur Macht” in his *Nietzsche Lesen* [Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982].) The Leftist abuse of Nietzsche appears most effectually in Jacques Derrida’s subtle metamorphosis of Nietzsche into a Feminist; see his *Spurs* (cf. my “Woman, Nietzsche, and Nature,” *Maieutics*; Winter, 1981, pp. 27–42). The East Germans and Soviets must be smiling; although two of the three editors of the Critical Edition are East Germans, as follows from their possession of the *Nachlass* at Weimar, you cannot buy their Critical Edition in East Germany. Nietzsche, who did call himself dynamite, is for the West.

24. See Strauss, “The Three Waves of Modernity,” in *Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss* edited by Hilail Gildin (Detroit: Wayne State, 1989), pp. 81–98. In his book Bloom mentions Strauss once by name and quotes from him at least three other times (pp. 227, 264, 292); perhaps he wanted to protect Strauss from attack or perhaps he wanted to “fight his own battles” without claiming a dead man’s approval; it is, after all, not easy to express the gratitude you feel to a teacher without at the same time seeming to claim him as your big backer. However, Bloom’s choice did mean he would not be able to guide innocent readers, especially young students, to Strauss, and that his account of Chicago lacks its center. Knowing readers will, of course, be aware of the discerning appreciation Bloom elsewhere expresses for his teacher.

25. Not that we need accept the premise of this fear: that no one would survive world war carried on with nuclear weapons. Perhaps the Swiss, who can protect 95 percent of their people in their mountain fastnesses, will inherit the earth.

26. As a youngster, I once asked Mr. Strauss, “So, is Heidegger a philosopher?” Swiftly he replied, with raised eyes, an elevated hand, and a near-whistle “Wheew.”

27. In a course at the New School in the mid forties entitled “Reason and Revelation” (according to Mr. Richard Kennington).

28. Cf. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 301.

29. Plato’s Democratic Man and Nietzsche’s Last Man differ in another way; while Socrates could exist and even thrive in a regime made in the image of the former (such as Athens), Nietzsche would find it excruciating to exist in a regime made in the image of the latter (thus the highest test of the philosopher, the eternal return of the same, includes the eternal return of the Last Man). The democratic man, or at least his American version, as Mr. Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., pointed out in his defense of Bloom, is good natured; when he says democracy is good, he acknowledges a standard of goodness above democracy.

30. He is also one of only three students of Mr. Strauss, that I know of, to propose a great books program to the college he was teaching at (Hilail Gildin is the other). He is also the only one whose student saved an extant great books program (Thomas Pangle, the Directed Studies Program at Yale, in which he had first met Bloom). The only student of Mr. Strauss I know of who, having considered the regime a University ought to have, proposed one, is Mr. Leo Paul S. de Alvarez, at the University of Dallas; nor did he fail to conspire to defend an already pretty good one.

31. When he did, I let him go on and on, finally asked him “So what you are saying is you prefer high school and you intend to return to it?” and saw him get the point. To Mr. Do-you-

know-who-I am, who had burst in the door, interrupting a conference with another student, I suggested that for the time being he look in his shirt or jacket for a name tag, and later we could call the police to see if they had a picture of him.

32. When he says Socrates would never teach in a University, Bloom shows that he looks at himself from the same Socratic vantage point, which must include what Socrates would call lecturing and lecturers. Even if Socrates accepted a Chair in intellectual midwifery and wiseman-interrogation at the University, he would never lecture. Lectures, long speeches, are for sophists.

33. Although Mr. Bloom says he is hopeful about the University, he gives no reason to be, and his tone suggests he has no hope. Mr. Jacques Barzun, once the Provost of Columbia University, expressed the same view more explicitly, in "Scholarship Versus Culture," *The Atlantic Monthly* for November, 1984, saying that for the foreseeable future the University is over with as a home of the life of the mind, as also did his friend, Lionel Trilling, in the *American Scholar* (Winter, 1975); discussing a great books program I and some friends proposed at Dartmouth (and saw instituted at Queens College, by my friend Hilail Gildin), Mr. Trilling said to me, "Everything I am, I owe to the chance of teaching in such a program." See "Two Roads Diverged in a Wood," *The Dartmouth Review*, Vol X (15) 14 Feb. 1990, pp. 7–9.

34. Bloom names the MBA degree and the Economics major as the instruments by which commerce diverted the University, and he could have named the Student Life Office as the leading instrument by which the leftist media is now diverting the University from its mission. Of the University's financial pact with government and loss of its thoughtful independence, Bloom says almost nothing, except to imply it was in the cards once we accepted the Baconian Enlightenment aim of knowledge for the sake of power to relieve man's estate. True enough, but no reason not to notice the revolutionary character of this change. The old notion was that the University raised up learned men, possibly statesmen, that by requiring the virtues, intellectual and private, they might often encourage the moral and public virtues, and that that would do the country good; the new notion was that the University should do projects for Society, paid for by the Government, first in natural science, later in everything else. That the Universities contracted with the Government, soon dreamed under Kennedy of ruling it, and then provided arms research during an undeclared war, somewhat justified the later war protesters in their decision to protest on campus rather than in the polity. Somewhat—kicking the crutch supporting you (and keeping you exempt from war service) cannot be called the deed of the free, the brave, or the proud. One wonders if nations, any more than souls, can do well by forgetting their deeds and living the unexamined life. Bloom barely mentions the Vietnam War, its justice or injustice, and its consequence; on campus it certainly contributed to the corruption of standards every time, which was often, a teacher changed a grade to keep a student exempt from Selective Service. Perhaps Bloom felt he had enough fronts to fight on; then again, the surgeon who will not go with the knife for all the malignancy will not save the patient.

35. The only reviewer to question the accuracy of his account is Mr. George Anastaplo, but on the basis of hearsay not available to any reader of his review, and not subsequently published, so far as I know. In the Stone collection there is one account, by a long time publicist for Cornell, but its refutations tend as a whole to confirm rather than deny Bloom's account.

36. Even Blessed Isles College has its characteristic defects. The more nearly great works are the whole curriculum, the more *actively* the students need to acquire what they have merely inherited, but the less likely they will be asked to. Also, the more nearly great works are the whole curriculum, the more likely the college is to forget it needs good teachers to help the students acquire their inheritance. Both defects show up in the comparative slighting of writing at great books colleges. The better the curriculum, the more shared the studies, the more coherent and convivial the conversation will be, *but* the more likely it will be that writing will be not be cultivated and the exactness of mind it enforces attained. If you add to that the inclination of all self-conscious minorities, especially if persecuted or contemned, to succumb to the spirit of righteousness, by identifying themselves with the great standards they should still look up to, you have a formula for the loss of charity and the diminution of self-knowledge. No institution, not even the best—and these are the best colleges—is as worthy of love as the virtues themselves, a philosopher would say.

37. At the state school in the West, a teacher of American Government reported to me, “That unteachable heckler I mentioned has just apologized for all his ‘Euthyphronic’ behavior all term, but also suggested, with medical backing, that an accident four years ago means he simply cannot memorize the Declaration of Independence, as the other Honors students have all done. When the ‘doctor’ turned out to have a higher degree in education, I suggested that he write up the case of this peculiarly specific disability for the *New England Journal of Medicine*. No matter, I just discovered the administration erased Euthyphro from the class list a week before the final and have given him an independent study. And this student doesn’t even play football.”

38. This despite the inflation in letters of recommendation; to read them you would think this is the Golden Age. Despite this inflation—or in part because of it?

39. I believe Allan Bloom is still so delighted with the handout his students passed out at Cornell because it meant they had not been distracted from their studies. He cared more for their souls than his own life.

40. For another such victory at a better college in a better era, see Charles E. Garman, *Letters, Lectures, and Addresses* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909); Garman is the teacher who changed President Calvin Coolidge’s life; William James said of this volume, “It should serve as encouragement to the pure teacher the world over.”

41. Max O. Hocutt, “De-Grading Student Evaluations,” *Academic Questions* (Winter: 1987–88), pp. 55–64.

42. I think of John Kemeny, the mathematician and once a President, at Dartmouth.

43. I hope there are more. Contrariwise, here is the way the president of my alma mater, Mr. Derek Bok, talks: “Think of it this way: to go to Harvard University amounts to paying a little less than \$90 a day. For that you get something that perhaps does not compare with the Ritz-Carlton Hotel but does give you reasonably nice accommodations; you get three meals a day thrown in, you have athletic facilities, you have concert halls, you have stages for your play productions, you have an enormous library, and thrown in as an added bonus, you have a wonderful faculty and an enormous array of courses to take. When you put it that way, I think you’re getting quite a good value for your money, especially if you compare it to some other prices in the economy.” (“A Conversation with Derek Bok,” *Harvard Alumni Gazette*, June, 1990, p. 9) When you put it that way, I bet you don’t convince the student who longs for something noble to come to Harvard, or the student who was considering applying to Las Vegas and Atlantic City as well as Harvard. (Nor does this answer the question addressed to Mr. Bok: “Why does it cost so much to attend Harvard?”)

44. Donald Kagan, Yale University; Joseph Horn, University of Texas at Austin; Tom Dillon, Thomas Aquinas; Glenn Thurow, University of Dallas; Eva Brann, St. John’s (Annapolis), and Robert L. Spaeth; see, for example, the latter’s *Exhortations on Liberal Education* (Collegeville, Minn.: Saint John’s University, 1988). Again, I hope there are more and recall with gratitude the first I met, James Patrick. For a comparison with a generation ago, read Jacques Barzun’s *Teacher in America* (1944; 1981 reprint Liberty Press), a book filled with practical wisdom about teaching. Imagine him as your dean.

45. Alas, almost as in *Republic VIII*, things declined; one revolution ousted the founders from office, a second they and others protested by resigning their teaching posts, and a third, combining the looseness of democracy and the harshness of tyranny, institutionalized mediocrity. A Self Study stirred up Calumny; filling the files it became Truth; and Truth then pronounced sentence: “It is always safer to look at the high in the light of the low.” In five years the decline that elsewhere took twenty-five or more was accomplished. Plato suggests the tyrant goes for the wise and the courageous and leaves the moderate and just alone (567c: “just” in the lowest sense, those who are content if their money is not devalued), and so it was that the students resisted far more than the faculty. Both voted with their feet. Yet sometimes the good can disclose more of its nature under-going decline, like a peg and trunnel barn standing up to the deconstruction of two hard-hats on a bulldozer. As they tore this Old Dixie down, you got to see the intelligence of its great-hearted designers.

46. Nietzsche, in his Nachlass, *Musarion Ausgabe*, XIX, 79.

47. For Nietzsche’s account of the Nastiest Man (*der häßlichste Mensch*) see *Zarathustra IV*.

48. Those who attended the Madison Center Conference in October of 1989 got a preview, in Professor Houston A. Baker Jr.'s lecture, done in rap rhythm; now Second Vice President of the Modern Language Association, Professor Baker will one day deliver its Presidential address.

49. The best, to my mind, are by Mr. Harvey C. Mansfield Jr., answering Rorty and instructing Nussbaum, and Mr. Werner Dannhauser, the best riposter in the business, answering everybody; both and many more are to be found in a collection edited by Robert L. Stone, *Essays on The Closing of the American Mind* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1989); Mr. Stone tells me that the best in his opinion, one he commissioned, was cut from his collection by the insistence of the publisher, who also insisted on cuts in many others, particularly unfortunate since several snippets from essays that did not appear elsewhere make one want to read them whole. The collection contains Mr. Jaffa's challenging review.

50. At Stanford University, they still talk of the day several years ago when some 500 students, on a march with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, came up with a slogan for the next generation. The students were celebrating a new course at Stanford, one that would stress the contribution of minorities and women to Western culture, and they chanted: "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western culture's got to go," reads *The New York Times* of 19 January 1988. Agreed by all reports I've seen is that the changes in the curriculum were supported by arguments attacking the West and the course on it as racist and sexist, that Jackson supported the changes, joined the marchers, and signed their petition. However, a later *Washington Post* article (9 May 1988) quotes Prof. William Chace, a supporter of the old course, saying that at the end of the march Jackson said: "The issue is not that we don't want Western culture. We're from the West. But other cultures should be studied," a quotation corroborated by an at-the-time-of-the-event (1987) news release from the Stanford News Service, but not mentioned in the two at-the-time-of-the-event newspaper accounts, one of which (*Times Tribune*) says the crowd also chanted "Rainbow Culture." Although after the *Times* report the chant became national news, I have so far been unable to discover any disavowal of the chant by Rev. Jackson. Is the day far off when another American presidential candidate, perhaps a smoother Minister Farrakhan or a relapsed Wizard Duke, will run on a platform that reviles the reason, law, virtues, nature, and nature's God that the West has tried to measure itself by?

51. Until 1968, Derrida was a thoughtful student of modern philosophy, especially Husserl and Heidegger, and an interesting (if inaccurate) reader of Plato; after the student near-revolution in France, Derrida grew playful, but as Gadamer has said, "He would be very unhappy if we did not take his play seriously." Indeed. The mixture of hate and play in the students nearly brought down the French Republic; as Aron said, the French nation played hooky. Fortunately, de Gaulle's disappearance rang the bell and the Communists, who are rationalists, saw the students were nihilists, happy to destroy deep into the night and with no plans to build anything the next day, or perhaps they judged them not destructive enough to be able to step in after. Derrida seems to come out of those heady, headless days, and to want to perpetuate them, in prose and on earth. He would be very unhappy if we did not take his hatred of logos as reasonable.

52. One such association is the National Association of Scholars, with its journal, *Academic Questions*. Alas, Mr. Bennett withdrew to seek other office and Mr. Bloom followed suit. Did we lose a college in the making? Certainly many a student would have benefitted from the summer courses the Center planned, and their influence on their home colleges, though gradual, could have been important. Another association might be one of the better students, such as Students for a Stronger Education at UT-Austin, formed to ask individual teachers to look out for their interests, such as real books not textbooks, and to request administrations to stop degrading the degree. Or a reinvigorated Phi Beta Kappa, interested more in better conditions of study for its members (a good for all students) than in honors and ceremonies that serve study with the lips only.

53. See especially Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided* and other writings, including "The American Founding as the Best Regime: the Bonding of Civil and Religious Liberty" (awaiting publication by the Claremont Institute); and also my "Nature and Nature's God," *Wethersfield Essays*, Vol. II, ed. Ralph McInerney (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990).

54. See Karl Löwith's eyewitness reports, "Japan's Westernization and Moral Foundation." and "The Japanese Mind," *Social Research* (1942-43). Still one hesitates to equate Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany, since the former, however racist and cruel, was an aristocracy and the latter,

with its death camps, was on the way to becoming a total socialism. Totalitarianism, the new regime brought forth by our century, seems to require militant atheism at its basis. Is it an accident that Soviet Russia, which achieved the totalitarianism Hitler aimed at, was militantly atheistical? Ours is the first century in which militant atheistical states have arisen and the two we've suffered are responsible for crimes greater in both magnitude and quality, than any in all previous centuries. A lot of God's best images have suffered from those trying to murder Him.

55. For the best argument that America, being a Republic, is best served, as the soul is, by reflective (or philosophic) inquiry, best arising from engagement with the tradition of great works of the mind and heart, see Eva T. H. Brann, *Paradoxes of Education in a Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); her lucid observations and recommendations, which remind now of Miranda, now of Ariel, now of liberal-artist Prospero, are not, I think, diminished by her insufficient awareness of the Antonios whose spirit has invaded the University since 1968, if not St. John's. If Bloom's view of the academic scene is Platonic or Nietzschean or a mixture, hers is Aristotelian or Jeffersonian or a mixture. Her text and footnotes are generously loaded with gems from her reading and tips about neglected authors; I am most grateful to have met Mulcaster.