The Key Reporter

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Five ΦBK Associations Chartered in Triennium, 1987–88 Activities Reported in Newsletter

During the 1985–88 triennium, five Phi Beta Kappa associations were granted charters: San Antonio, Scarsdale/Westchester County, Greater Hartford, Long Island, and Pitt County, North Carolina. One new Phi Beta Kappa alumni group, the Eastern Illinois Association, was authorized by the Senate to represent the Society in its geographic area.

Each autumn, the United Chapters publishes a newsletter for the ΦBK associations, reporting details of association activities during the preceding academic year and listing the names and addresses for all association secretaries. If you wish to receive a copy of this newsletter, write to the United Chapters, 1811 Q St., N.W., Washington, DC 20009.

ΦBK Senate Encourages Chapters to Publicize Association Activities

In its continuing concern for promoting participation in association activities, the Senate has recommended to the chapters that they take steps to acquaint their new members with the opportunities available to them through association membership. The following letter was sent to all chapters:

Dear Chapter Secretary:

For members of Phi Beta Kappa who wish to participate in the Society's activities after graduation, the Phi Beta Kappa graduate associations have long offered an attractive opportunity. More than 50 such associations are now active throughout the country. They offer their members programs of intellectual stimulation and cultural interest, and frequently they serve their communities by providing scholarship support—often very substantial support—to promising students.

The Senate believes that the excellent work done by the associations in promoting the ideals of Phi Beta Kappa deserves to be supported and wishes, consequently, to suggest to the chapters a way in which they can help to acquaint the general membership—and particularly the newly elected members—with the associations. The suggestion is that the chapters consider adding [the following] brief passage about the associations to that part of the Form of Initiation that deals with the history of Phi Beta Kappa:

In 1877, the first Phi Beta Kappa graduate association was founded in New York City by Elihu Root, distinguished lawyer and statesman, who was joined by other Phi Beta Kappa members in organizing the association. There are now approximately fifty associations in major population centers throughout the country that offer members the opportunity to continue an active affiliation with Phi Beta Kappa after graduation. More information appears in your *Handbook for New Members*.

Liberal Learning in the Postmodern World

By Calvin O. Schrag

RUMBLINGS IN THE trenches suggest that educators and others battling for the republic of liberal learning in the United States are in deep trouble. Our chronicles of higher education and the news media have reported a growing threat to the well-being of the humanities specifically, and the arts and sciences more generally. National reports from the American educational establishment have trumpeted the perils:

- The Carnegie Foundation report, *The Quest for Common Learning* (1981), described general education in the United States as a "disaster area," in which the proliferation of specialized courses and the random selection of topics and themes have led to a distressing curricular incoherence.
- The *Nation at Risk* report, published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983, indicted the entire U.S. educational establishment for "committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament."
- The 1984 National Institute of Education's report *Involvement in Learning* discovered an unsettling abandonment of the traditional arts and science fields. Between 1977 and 1984, majors in the physical sciences declined 13 percent; majors in the humanities, 17 percent; majors in the social sciences, 19 percent; and majors in the biological sciences, 21 percent.
- The National Endowment for the Humanities' report *To Reclaim a Legacy* (1984) deplored the undue emphasis on marketable skills, hyperspecialization, plethora of self-isolating vocabularies, and gradual erosion of the legacies of world history and literature.
- The report on *Integrity in the College Curriculum,* published by the Association of American Colleges in 1985, cited as evidence for the decline and devaluation of liberal learning the rampant fragmentation across the curriculum and the failure of commitment and accountability on the part of the faculty and administration.

Calvin O. Schrag

- In the five-year follow-up report to *Nation at Risk* (*American Education: Making It Work*, issued in April 1988), Secretary of Education William J. Bennett said, "We're seeing progress. We're doing better. But we're not where we should be. . . . We are still at risk."

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President-elect Will Be 15th ΦBK U.S. President

As of 1988, Phi Beta Kappa's membership roster included the names of 14 presidents of the United States. Their names, and the names of the chapters that elected them, are as follows:

John Quincy Adams (Harvard University), Martin Van Buren (Union College), Franklin Pierce (Bowdoin College), Rutherford B. Hayes (Kenyon College), James A. Garfield (Williams College), Chester A. Arthur (Union College), Grover Cleveland (Princeton University), Theodore Roosevelt (Harvard University), William H. Taft (Yale University), Woodrow Wilson (Wesleyan University), Calvin Coolidge (Amherst College), Franklin D. Roosevelt (Harvard University), Harry S. Truman (University of Missouri), and Dwight D. Eisenhower (Columbia University).

Four of the 14 were elected as undergraduates (Adams, Arthur, Taft, and Theodore Roosevelt), the rest as alumni or honorary members. Eleanor Roosevelt, who was elected to honorary membership by the Radcliffe chapter in 1941, is the only Phi Beta Kappa first lady.

Liberal Learning

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These reports present a serious indictment of the academic community we have come to know and love. What has occasioned this state of affairs that appears to be so inimical to liberal learning in the late 20th century?

Although the causes of such an extensive phenomenon are complex and any solutions are tentative at best, it may be possible to achieve a workable perspective on the matter by setting the issue against the background of postmodernity. The advent of postmodernity has been announced in so many quarters that it is quickly becoming a cliché: from postmodern art to postmodern literature, science, philosophy, cultural analysis, politics—the list goes on. There may be no common thread, only certain identification tags:

- Postmodern art is antirealist. It will have no truck with the realists' project of presenting the presentable via representation.
- Postmodern literature is suspicious of any quest for rules of literature and opts for experimentation rather than recollection. Whereas Proust is modernist, Joyce is postmodernist.
- Postmodern science is flagged as the "search for instabilities." Shifting paradigms, uncertainty, unpredictability, incommensurability—these are the "rules" (or, if you will, antirules) of the scientific game.
- Postmodern philosophy is antifoundationalist, suspicious of theory, and preoccupied with an interpretive analysis of our variegated social practices.
- Postmodern cultural analysis finds its mission in the tracking of the multifarious ideologies that infiltrate our institutional life.
- Postmodern politics is bent toward intervention rather than dialogue.

Four Features of Postmodernism

Obviously, to attempt a universal definition of postmodernity would be sheer folly. It is not a unified system of beliefs; nor is it the designation of a chronological period of history (although admittedly it draws heavily on post-World War II intellectual and social currents). It is more an attitude, a frame of mind, an assemblage of social practices, a way of seeing the world and acting within it.

But some general features of this pervasive phenomenon that have a peculiar bearing on our concerns about the future of liberal learning can be identified: the plurality of narratives, the multiplicity of language games, the heterogeneity of social practices, and the diversity of forms of knowledge.

The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard provides one of the more illuminating accounts of what flies under the flag of postmodernism in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, which contains his familiar one-liner: "I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives." If you are postmodern, you will resist the urge to tell big stories (or tall tales!). You will consolidate your discourse into local rather than grand narratives. You will steer clear of unifying principles and overarching designs that purport to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth about all time and existence. You will be suspicious of unities, celebrate plurality, remain sensitive to differences, and emphasize invention. The concluding sentence in Lyotard's epilogue, "What Is Postmodernism?" provides the quintessential marker: "The answer is: Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witnesses to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name."

The Effects of Postmodernism on the University

What are the effects of pluralism, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and diversity on the contemporary university? Something about the ethos of pluralism seems to militate against general education, curricular coherence, the integration of knowledge, and the singularity of educational purposes and goals—all of which we take to be self-evident and intrinsically desirable for a liberal education.

How does one respond to the postmodernist challenge to these presuppositions and ideals of liberal learning?

I see the celebration of pluralism in the postmodernist literature as an accentuation of something that has been with us for some time, particularly in American culture. To say that American society has from its very beginning been characterized by heterogeneity and diversity is to announce a truism. As the proverbial melting pot of races and ethnic groups, social and religious practices, and political and economic institutions, the United States has been a veritable laboratory of experimentation with different styles of life and modes of thought. And it is surely no accident that one of the most influential figures in the history of American philosophy, William James, titled one of his more important works "A Pluralistic Universe."

But perhaps too little attention has been paid to the effects of pluralism on the life of the American university. These effects have been registered in various ways. The partitioning of the university into schools, schools into departments, and departments into area studies within departments belies a plurality of methodologies and a heterogeneity of disciplinary matrices. The methodology for investigating the behavior of subatomic particles is manifestly different from the methodology for accounting for the causes of the Civil War. The biologist's thinking, guided by the instrumentation of a microscope and a computer, needs to be distinguished from that of the painter, who thinks with the end of a brush. Knowledge does not proceed in the same way in the study of matter as it does in the study of mind. It thus appears that on the proverbial bottom line our citadels of learning are more like a *pluriversity* than a university.

There are some rather concrete, existential side effects to all this. Students often experience a measure of academic schizophrenia as they go from a class in economics (where they learn about the gross national product) to a class in biology (where they learn about DNA), and then to a class in history (where they learn about the French Revolution), and then to a class in philosophy (where they learn about Kant's categorical imperative)—and so on. Is there any way, a perplexed student might ask, that all this hangs together, constitutes a coherent whole, and somehow informs a common discourse of knowledge? Apparently, economics, biology, history, and philosophy are all fields of knowledge and achievements of the exercise of human reason. Agreement on this could provide a launchpad for a simple and unencumbered definition of the function and goal of the university: the university is a place where reason resides.

Something about the ethos of pluralism seems to militate against general education, curricular coherence, the integration of knowledge, and the singularity of educational purposes and goals—all of which we take as being self-evident and intrinsically desirable for a liberal education. How does one respond to the postmodernist challenge to these presuppositions and ideals of liberal learning?

Yet, a moment's reflection will disclose that this definition contributes precious little to the solution of our problem. Indeed, it is precisely the pluralization of reason that is at issue in postmodern thought. If reason itself is pluralized, diversified, and relativized, any claims for the unifying and integrating function of reason become suspect. And this is precisely the bugbear of postmodernist thought. Reason is scattered abroad and disseminated into heterogeneous forms of discourse, language games, methodologies, and disciplinary matrices.

Not only has reason (at least the classical version of it) become suspect because it cannot do the job of unifying the different disciplines and somehow summing up the academic experience, it also has come under suspicion because of the insinuations of power in its various displays. The cause of rationality that the university so proudly espouses and the search for knowledge that is our professed vocation remain vulnerable to the myriad power relations in which they are ensconced. The university may be the place where reason and knowledge reside, but it is also the place where power is in play.

The French philosopher Michael Foucault, who is usually included in the grand company of contemporary postmodernist thinkers, has invented the suggestive locution "regimes of knowledge," highlighting the intersection of knowledge and power. The various disciplines in academe are "regimes of knowledge," political units with their seats of authority, prescribed techniques, and systems of rewards and punishments. The dynamics and constellations of power are apparent not only in the obvious and much-cited arenas of contention (administration and faculty interchange, hiring and firing policies, tenure and promotion procedures, core curriculum design, departmental autonomy and authority), but also (sometimes rather subtly) in the very definition, organization, and valuation of knowledge.

The definition and valuation of knowledge in the diverse schools and departments proceed via disciplinary maneuvers through which certain texts become canonized and certain procedures regimented, while other texts are marginalized and other procedures are outlawed. For example, every instructor and every student of philosophy must at some juncture ask the question about the regimentation involved in the canonization of the "classical texts," the "great books," the "pivotal thinkers" prescribed and sanctioned for the proper teaching of philosophy. As everyone who has studied any philosophy knows, this list includes Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Hegel. To gain a major in philosophy without achieving some acquaintance with these philosophers, however minuscule (and in some cases it is minuscule) would be scandalous! But why scandalous? Why do the texts of these thinkers constitute the "philosophical bible," the spectrum of authoritative philosophical knowledge, the regime of philosophical truth?

We notice immediately that this list is very Eurocentric. Why the absence of Asian, African, and South American philosophers? Do people from these historical regions of the world have nothing to contribute to the discipline? And even within the context of the so-called Western philosophical tradition, why are the texts of these particular philosophers determined to be in some sense normative? Why not Thales of Meletus? After all, he is reputedly the one who started the whole show. Whatever happened to Albert the Great? If he was "the Great" he must have said something of significance. And then there is Herman the German. He has certainly gotten a bad rap. Why is he in the margins rather than in the main text?

So the regimentation of knowledge is evident in the canonization of texts in the various humanistic disciplines. It is also at work in the theory construction of the various scientific disciplines, as recent historians and philosophers of science (Kuhn, Feyerabend, Lakotos, and Mary Hesse) have shown. "Normal science" according to these thinkers, consists of the institutionalized procedures dictated by the authority of an accepted paradigm. But these accepted paradigms are nothing more than regimes established by the community of practicing scientists at a given time. Scientific paradigms are historical achievements rather than eternal truths. They are subject to displacement with the emergence of new authorities and new regimes. When this happens, scientific thought undergoes a rupture, heralding what Kuhn calls the advent of "revolutionary science." Regimes, disciplinary matrices, authorities, power relations, and revolutions appear to be the very stuff of academe.

So, what are we to do at the end of modernity, when our ideal of a unifying reason has been fractured by the dissemination of knowledge and the intrusion of power? And how are we, the members of Phi Beta Kappa, to respond to this challenge? Postmodernists talk a lot about the "end of philosophy." Are not the very ideals of the Society, whose motto is *Philosophia bios kubernitos* (Philosophy is the guide for life), threatened?

A Possible Solution

I suggest that we respond first by acknowledging the "truth" of postmodernity. The point is that we may be well advised to stop looking for a grand narrative, an overarching or undergirding (depending on your preference for metaphors of height or metaphors of depth) unifying principle or method that grounds all knowledge and all creative endeavor. The monolithic paradigm of a totalizing rationality may have had its day. Clearly, the modern university, dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries, bought into the stock of this monolithic paradigm and erected its regimes of knowledge within a hierarchy of disciplines. Disciplines were facilely divided up and sorted out into juxtaposed territorial enclaves of the theoretical and the applied. The applied disciplines—those that deal with *techné*—were constantly reminded about their subordination to the theoretical, for what is "applied" is precisely an application of theory. The organization of the university came under the domination of pure theory and became involved in the project of building theory upon theory, displaying a peculiar syndrome of the "edifice complex"! But this was not the end of it, for there was still the power play to secure the "centered space" from which theory originates and on which its multiple expressions are founded—that space that provides the unimpeachable foundation for knowledge.

There have always been ample candidates vying for this space—from theology to mathematics, physics, and, more recently, linguistics. And philosophy has not been particularly timid in its effort to stake out its claim for centrality, inviting a measure of self-arrogation on the part of philosophy as a special discipline, producing what might be called the "Greyhound bus driver syndrome of philosophy": Leave the thinking to us!

This monolithic, foundationalist, modernist concept of rationality, and the accompanying power play on the part of various disciplines to be its divinely chosen custodian, should be abandoned. One of the chief merits of postmodernism (and I believe that it has some merits) is that it has made us aware of the vagaries of a "totalizing" concept of reason. It has awakened us from our modernist slumbers.

Yet the displacement of the modern conception of rationality through such an awakening does not entail a displacement of reason in every sense. The tendency toward a displacement of reason per se in postmodernism needs to be curtailed, for it invites a blatant irrationalism. Reason need not capitulate to the random play of power and to the relativization of all forms of knowledge and all modes of discourse. The university is still the place where reason resides. The Phi Beta Kappa ideal remains intact, although it will need to be deconstructed and decentralized as an overarching principle of unification. It needs to be transfigured and articulated in a new way, but it should not be cast aside.

Two Uses of Reason in the University

There are two specific ways in which reason remains operative in the life of the university and in the comportment of our personal existence: as a catalyst for critique and as a performance of evaluation.

As a catalyst for critique, reason is the resource through which different modes of discourse and different forms of life are subject to critical analysis. A goal of lib-

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eral learning is to foster and develop a critical mind. In academe, no professed theories, no alleged facts, and no established procedures are sacrosanct. There are no absolutes: all theories, alleged facts, and procedures are subject to possible revision. Every assertion or claim requires the qualifier "until further notice." This is why an educated mind is perpetually ready for reexamination and reassessment. In the community of scientists and the community of humanists alike, a closed and dogmatic mind remains an impediment to liberal learning.

Traveling with this requirement for critique in our refigured notion of rationality is the requirement for evaluation. It is here that the humanistic ideal of reason comes to particular prominence. Not only does an educated mind need to exercise strategies for critique, it also needs to be skilled in the discernment and choice of values. On this point also some unfortunate tendencies in postmodernity need to be corrected. With its emphasis on the plurality of narratives and the heterogeneity of language games, postmodernism comes perilously close to a stark relativism in which everything goes, no particular interpretation can be better than any other, and no form of life or mode of behavior can be judged as more worthy than the rest. This impulse toward relativism is, of course, hardly new. It was a persisting concern in the writings of Plato, for example. But it has become a peculiarly notable issue for our time.

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There is something in the standard formulation of the relativism issue that is at least unproductive, if not wrongheaded. The proverbial sophomoric question, "But aren't all conceptual and moral views relative?" is at once unanswerable and ill-conceived. To answer this question, one would need to be privy to *all* conceptual and moral views. It would be as difficult to conduct such a God-like survey of all moral points of view as to conduct an inventory of absolute moral claims. Relativism and absolutism may well be self-defeating in the end because the questions they pose are unanswerable, leading eventually to a kind of conceptual wearisomeness.

The fact remains that we do make judgments about one interpretation's being better than another and one life-style's being more virtuous than the next. But we make these judgments in the concrete situation as we confront an alien interpretation or a putatively reprehensible social program or mode of personal behavior. We do not make these judgments on an abstract metalevel of inquiry, speculating as to whether all views are simply relative or whether they might be anchored in an absolute. These judgments arise only when we are confronted with what William James called a "forced option," or what Kierkegaard referred to as the existential "either/or." In a concrete situation of racial discrimination we encounter the forced option of supporting racism or seeking measures to expunge it. When hostilities break out between two nations, we must wrestle with the issue of the use or nonuse of nuclear power. Admittedly, on these issues we are always confronted with a multiplicity of reasons, a plurality of values, a variety of points of view. But this fact does not preclude the responsibility for reflective judgment and decision, or indeed concrete action.

The contribution that liberal learning makes at this junction is that it carves out a space for rational, deliberative reflection. Within this space, as the postmodernists are quick to remind us, conflicting interpretations and diverging valuations are at play. But as deliberating beings, we always stand at the crossroads. We are called upon to choose. And we need to make decisions that are informed by the legacy of values in our tradition, attentive to the possibilities for the future, and cognizant of the requirements of the present. A choice is rational to the degree that it integrates our past and our future into the interstices of the present. Schooling in the making of such choices is an intrinsic part of the vocation, the high calling, of the university as the place where reason resides. It is this vocation that remains so poignantly epitomized in the ideals of Phi Beta Kappa.

Calvin O. Schrag, George Ade Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, Purdue University, gave the address on which this article is based before the University of South Dakota Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa in April 1988.

Recommended Reading

Robert B. Heilman

Jane Austen. Tony Tanner. Harvard, 1987. $20; paper, $8.95.

Admirable readings of the novels, with considerable stress on Austen's having a historical awareness she is often supposed to lack: her sense of cultural crisis, of threats to order and civility, resembles that of various thinkers of the time.

My Life in Pictures. Malcolm Muggeridge. Herbert Press: William Morrow, 1987. $22.95.

The "life" consists of narrative commentaries on about 180 excellent photographs from boyhood to old age. In commenting on many eminent figures, Muggeridge reveals himself as a sharp but good-natured and fair observer.

Lui: A View of Him. Louise Colet. Tr. by Marilyn Gaddis Rose. Univ. of Georgia, 1986. $24.95.

In this autobiographical fiction, Colet's impermanent lover Flaubert is only an offstage, self-centered letter-writer. On stage are de Musset, the poet as mad lover; George Sand, the professional novelist who betrayed him; and Colet herself, clinging to chilly Flaubert instead of passionate de Musset. Notes identify many historical characters.

Harley Granville Barker: A Preface to Modern Shakespeare. Christine Dymkowski. Folger Library and Associated University Presses, 1986. $32.50.

From a study of his Shakespeare productions, his numerous *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, and other writings, Dymkowski makes a good case for Barker as the key transitional figure between traditional and modern staging for Shakespeare. The style, though academic, is not repellent.

A Short History of Irish Literature. Seamus Deane. Notre Dame, 1986. $27.95.

After dutiful comments on earlier writers, Deane comes alive in dealing with Burke and provides excellent discussions of subsequent writers up to the present. He regularly examines them in terms of their relation to social and political turmoil, and his judgments are impressive.

The Scottish Postbag: Eight Centuries of Scottish Letters. Ed. by George Bruce and Paul H. Scott. Cambridge Univ., 1986. $17.95.

Complete or abridged, 227 letters by about 125 writers (over 100 since 1700) reflect various Scottish feelings and interests (patriotic, political, literary, scientific). They constitute a lively, though sketchy and fragmented, history. Brief notes identify writers, but not recipients or persons mentioned.

The Life Before Us ("Madame Rosa"). Romain Gary (Émile Ajar). Tr. by Ralph Man-

heim. New Directions, 1986. $7.95.

A paperback reissue of the translation of the excellent novel that won the Prix Goncourt in 1976. The narrator, a streetwise 14-year-old, recording his care of a dying old woman (survivor of the Holocaust and of a streetwalker's career), reflects sharply on human experience as he pictures a polyglot Paris slum.

The Feminine Reclaimed: The Idea of Woman in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. Stevie Davies. Univ. of Kentucky, 1986. $25.

Davies writes, with learning and vivacity, not about the social status of women but about the theoretical and imaginative role of woman as indispensable to humanity in the works of three great writers whose images, symbols, and allusions undermine the frequent portrayal of them as conventionally patriarchal.

Selected Brontë Poems. Ed. by Edward Chitham and Tom Winnifrith. Basil Blackwell, 1986. $34.95.

A plain but convenient collection of 30 poems by Charlotte, 22 by Branwell, 61 by Emily, and 28 by Anne, with short introductory essays and a brief editorial note on each poem.

William Cowper: A Biography. James King. Duke, 1986. $35.

A low-key biography that might have been played for striking reversals: an urbane man-about-London is overcome by evangelicalism; moves to the country; has five major depressions; attracts the steady devotion (half-sexual, half-motherly) of several women; fights melancholia with carpentry, gardening, and writing; and finds himself a man of letters.

Hidden Rivalries in Victorian Fiction: Dickens, Realism, and Revaluation. Jerome Meckier. Univ. of Kentucky, 1987. $29.

Lively, assertive, but not always orderly chapters argue that Wilkie Collins tried to outdo Dickens in Gothic fiction, Trollope parodied him, and Mrs. Gaskell and George Eliot (twice) challenged Dickens's "realism" by using characters and plots that clearly alluded to those in his novels.

A Reader's Delight. Noel Perrin. Univ. Press of New England, 1988. $15.95; paper, $9.95.

Forty short essays record, amiably and vivaciously, the pleasures afforded by "neglected minor masterpieces," mostly novels, of various ages and climes (20 English, 5 European, 14 American, 1 Asian).

Russell B. Stevens

Toward a New Philosophy of Biology: Observations of an Evolutionist. Ernst Mayr. Harvard, 1988. $35.

The power of Mayr's scholarship and his contributions to the biological sciences are already fully established. In this newest of his prolific writings he has assembled nine "packages" of what he chooses to call essays, each package preceded by several pages of introductory comment designed to set the stage. Not surprisingly, in light of his central enthusiasms, the sections bear titles such as Adaptation, Diversity, Darwin, and Species. Biologists will certainly be inclined to take his views seriously; it is much to be hoped that physical scientists will as well.

Time, the Familiar Stranger. J. T. Fraser. Univ. of Massachusetts, 1987. $24.95.

Dust jackets are, occasionally, realistic appraisals of the books they enclose. Here is an example, for it says, "This wide-ranging, learned book surveys the enormous variety of our understandings of time, both in the everyday world and in the specialized realms of the sciences and humanities. From the majestic visions of time and the timeless in major religions, to those more textural conceptions of time derived from ordinary activity, [the author] offers the general reader a fascinating history of the idea and experience of time."

Amen!

Nuclear Imperatives and Public Trust: Dealing with Radioactive Wastes. Luther J. Carter. Resources for the Future, 1987. $25 (plus $3 postage/handling).

Pesticides and Politics: The Life Cycle of a Public Issue. Christopher J. Bosso. Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1987. $29.95.

In neither of these two studies do any of the participants—government employees, industry representatives, politicians and legislators, scientists and engineers, individual citizens of whatever persuasion—come out with anything approaching a shining image. Rather, these are accounts of the often emotional, often irrational and inconsistent, often self-serving ways in which two of the most important and pervasive issues of the mid- and late-20th-century Western world have been addressed. At the same time it is important that the details of the matter be carefully examined, in the hope that a more consistent, informed, and effective course of action can be realized. Carter and Bosso have done their part in making the information available in convenient form; it remains to be seen how well we shall take advantage of their work.

Genetic Takeover and the Mineral Origins of Life. A. G. Cairns-Smith. Cambridge Univ., 1982. $39.50; 1987, paper, $24.95.

At first, even second, glance, this book will seem daunting to most readers who are not specialists in the physical sciences. Yet it is entirely possible to get the main points of Cairns-Smith's argument without being obliged to follow each section to its detailed conclusion. The first two chapters—"Current Doctrine" and "Three Doubts"—set the stage for the entire book and in so doing challenge the widely held view of a so-called primordial soup. In the author's view, the earliest steps in the evolution of life must have been based on mineral crystals and on the attributes of clays, only later to be supplanted by "our" kind of biochemistry. At the very least, his is an imaginative and closely reasoned argument.

The Kookaburras' Song: Exploring Animal Behavior in Australia. John Alcock. Univ. of Arizona, 1988. $19.95.

At one level, this volume is a chattily written collection of upwards of two dozen thoroughly random accounts of various Australian birds, bugs, and beasts. At that level it is a comfortable, amusing, and generally informative account of species most North Americans are unlikely to encounter first-hand. But there is much more to Alcock's presentation if its full message is sought after. To put the matter rather too simply, he makes a persuasive case for the selective pressures of Darwinian natural selection as a good and sufficient explanation of the apparent oddities of animal behavior.

The New Medical Marketplace: A Physician's Guide to the Health Care Revolution. Anne Stoline and Jonathan P. Weiner. Johns Hopkins, 1988. $26.50; paper, $12.95.

Although this study was prepared primarily for the enlightenment of physicians and others in the medical professions, it can profitably be read by all and sundry. It summarizes the profound changes in practices and attitudes from the past to the present and examines costs from the perspective of consumer (the patient), provider (the physician), and payer (now largely a third party). Unless, through dispassionate sources such as this, each of the three players in the drama acquires a better understanding of the forces that drive the system of health care, there is little chance for improved relationships. The book is relatively brief and wholly readable.

Victoria Schuck

The Power Game: How Washington Works. Hedrick Smith. Random House, 1988. $24.95.

Until this book came along, no one had published an analytical political history of what has happened since 1974 and Watergate to create the kind of governance that exists in the Reagan administration. Using the metaphor of games, former *New York Times*man Smith now reveals how a new breed of members of Congress, expanded television, PACs money, continuing election campaigns, new lobbies, aggressive staffs, government complexities, and new marketing techniques have brought about new rules and burst the seams of the classical tripartite separation of power. It all began five years after Sam Rayburn's death and is alluded to by Tip O'Neill in his tales of how his own behavior changed to meet the new politics.

Mere tinkering with reforms won't cure the "buying" of influence; the iron triangle of congressional committees, contractors, and the Pentagon; the weakened political parties; the fragility of coalitions; or the dominating power of the National Security Agency, for instance. The president's appearance before Congress at regular intervals for questioning could help to ensure responsibility. But if the change is to be fundamental, American voters must rid themselves of the ticket splitting that mismatches the power of the president and Congress and contributes to a disconnect of campaigning and governing. Smith calls for genuine two-party competition across the country for seats in Congress and improved methods to finance television to replace the prevailing methods. This promises to be one of the most important books of the 1980s.

Rayburn: A Biography. D. B. Hardeman and Donald C. Bacon. Texas Monthly Press, 1987. $21.95.

Man of the House: The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neill, with William Novak. Random House, 1987. $19.95. St. Martin's, 1988, paper, $4.95.

The biography (Rayburn, 1882–1969) and memoir (O'Neill, 1912–) not only portray the political lives of the two Democratic Speakers who dominated the leadership in the House of Representatives of some 80 years of this century but afford intimate details of national decision making in an era when political parties stabilized coalitions over long periods of time and presidents were nominated in brokered conventions. Each man rose to the speakership after youthful experience, including leadership, in state houses—Rayburn in Texas and O'Neill in Massachusetts. In the U.S. House, where power was centralized and dispensed hierarchically and members had "to go along" if they wished "to get along," Speakers avoided

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Recommended Reading

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gridlock even when divided governments occurred. In presenting the vast array of political leaders in local, state, and national positions affected by the Speakers, the books prepare the reader for today's Washington. Of the two books, O'Neill's is far and away the more lively and interesting.

Politics, Self, and Society: A Theme and Variations. Heinz Eulau. Harvard, 1986. $39.95.

One of the giants of the behavioral approach to the study of politics has distilled a lifetime of research—20 papers, beginning with one in the late 1950s, the bulk in the 1960s and 1970s, and one yet to be published—explicating the mighty contribution he has made to the methodology and theory that have raised the discipline from the doldrums of institutionalism and law and vastly expanded its vitality since World War II.

With political behavior of the individual person a central point for analysis, Eulau simultaneously probes "the political organization," whether a small group, a community, an elite, a mass movement, or a nation, in categories such as events, structures, functions, processes, or relationships. Through his research of four state legislatures, 82 city councils, and countless neighborhoods, Eulau has studied class and political party activity, the power structure and legislative roles, interest groups, the convergence of lawyers and politicians, representation as related to federalism, day and night dwellers, and policy "maps" of city councils. The final chapter on professionalism, technology, and the future role of professions is one of the most significant in the book. Eulau writes for specialists, but generalists can gain much with a little additional effort. Harvard would do well to publish a paperback edition.

Life and Death in Shanghai. Nien Cheng. Grove Press, 1986. $19.95. Penguin, 1988, paper, $8.95.

This book is an account of the Proletarian Chinese Cultural Revolution seen through the experiences of the British-educated widow of a former Kuomintang diplomat and manager of Shell International Petroleum in Shanghai who succeeded him as an official in the company upon his death. It is the narrative of more than six years of imprisonment in solitary confinement by Red Guards who captured the reform movement of Mao. Her treasured possessions were looted; she was subjected to brutal interrogation at intervals, accused of imperialist "spying," and given inadequate food and medical treatment. Cheng's indomitable courage and ability to survive without recanting finally led to her release (after the death of Mao, the elimination of the power of the "Gang of Four," and the simultaneous visit of Nixon to China). She spent six more years being "rehabilitated"—and seeking to discover the details surrounding the murder of her daughter, an aspiring young film actress whose life had been taken by Revolutionaries—before fleeing to the United States. It is a tale of venomous inhumanities documented in the literature of reform.

Women Leaders in American Politics. Ed. by James David Barber and Barbara Kellerman. Prentice-Hall, 1986. $24.

A collection by some 30 writers of more than 40 essays, quotations, and notes appears in a volume about the role and achievements of women from the colonial and Constitution-writing period to the present. Included are Anne Hutchinson, Abigail Adams, Margaret Sanger, Betty Friedan, Susan B. Anthony, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Byrne, Bella Abzug, Sandra Day O'Connor, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Elizabeth Dole, and Geraldine Ferraro. Their words and the essays are designed to show the political context to which each belongs—civil liberties, groups in action, mass media, right to vote and lobby, political parties and elections, the presidency, and foreign policy.

Richard N. Current

Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom. Peter Kolchin. Harvard (Belknap), 1987. $25.

American slavery and Russian serfdom developed as systems of forced labor on the edges of expanding Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Both lasted until the 1860s. Unlike slavery, however, serfdom was a "largely nonracial system," and the serfs enjoyed somewhat more autonomy than did the slaves. There were other basic similarities and differences, as Kolchin has discovered after mastering a vast literature in Russian as well as English. He elucidates both systems of "unfree labor" in a model of comparative history.

The Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era. James M. McPherson. Oxford, 1988. $35.

Both Union and Confederate soldiers thought of themselves as freedom fighters, and they sang their separate versions of the same song, "Battle Cry of Freedom." More than 50,000 books and pamphlets have been written about the war in which they fought. This book, covering the period from 1847 to 1865 but emphasizing the Civil War years, is far and away the best one-volume comprehensive account. In a lucid, flowing narrative style the author presents a distillation of the most up-to-date and reliable research, including his own.

American Education: The Metropolitan Experience, 1876-1980. Lawrence A. Cremin. Harper & Row, 1988. $35.

To Cremin, education is a broad subject. It reflects not only pedagogy but also theology, philosophy, sociology, and other currents of thought. It is provided not only by schools, colleges, and universities, together with churches, libraries, and museums, but also by publishers of newspapers, magazines, and books, by movie, radio, and television producers, and by business corporations and government bureaus, including propaganda agencies. All these influences on education (and miseducation) get authoritative and fascinating treatment in this huge volume, which concludes a trilogy covering a wide swath of intellectual life and popular culture from the beginning of American history.

The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon. Michael S. Sherry. Yale, 1987. $29.95.

Supposedly the airplane was going to make wars so horrible they would never occur again or, if they did, they would be over quickly and mercifully. So-called strategic bombing (actually, indiscriminate bombing) made World War II horrible indeed, especially for city dwellers in Germany and Japan, but it did not bring a quick and merciful end to the war. It led, of course, to mass destruction by fire and finally by nuclear blasts. Nowadays we want to believe that nuclear capability will do what air power was once supposed to do. Sherry's thorough account of fantasy and reality in the past makes optimism difficult in the present.

Cause at Heart: A Former Communist Remembers. Junius Irving Scales and Richard Nickson. Univ. of Georgia, 1987. $24.95.

Junius Scales, scion of a prominent North Carolina family, joined the Communist party as a youthful idealist hoping to better the lot of millworkers and blacks. He became in the 1950s the only American ever imprisoned for mere party membership, which he had already resigned in disillusionment. A victim of the anti-Communist hysteria of the time, he "was being buffeted by events and circumstances that had nothing to do with him or the merits of his case," his attorney, Telford Taylor, writes in a foreword to this profoundly moving autobiography.

Frederick J. Crosson

Nietzsche's Teaching. Laurence Lampert. Yale, 1987. $29.50.

Anyone who has tried to read the book that Nietzsche considered his greatest work knows what a baffling, frustrating text it is even for someone generally familiar with Nietzsche's thought. Filled with long lyrical passages, obscure dramatic action, and extravagant pronouncements by its protagonist, it flashes occasionally with powerful insights and compelling images. I found this close commentary to open the text in a superb fashion, disclosing the intricate network of thought that binds the whole narrative together. Lampert traces the structure while carrying on a dialogue with other interpreters (Heidegger, Kaufmann, et al.), persuasively arguing against a deconstructionist reading and for the claim (among others) that the provisional teaching on the superman is rendered obsolete by the definitive teaching of eternal return. Highly recommended.

Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Alasdair MacIntyre. Notre Dame, 1988. $22.95.

Continuing the line of investigation begun with his *After Virtue,* MacIntyre here confronts the issue of how we are to address the conflictive questions of what justice requires without first resolving the meaning of what it is to pursue a rational inquiry into such questions. For we live in a society confluent to several traditions of what is *reasonable to begin* from and to accept as a justified claim, and there is, he affirms, no superordinate standard by which to adjudicate their sundry oppositions: all reasonableness is embedded in a tradition. Four such traditions are delineated and compared: Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Hume. The vindication of a tradition, he concludes, rests on its continuing capacity to understand and account for the achievements and failures of its rivals in its own terms. A sober and responsible contribution to our self-understanding.

William James: Selected Unpublished Letters, 1885–1910. Ed. by Frederick J. Scott. Ohio State Univ., 1986. $45.

Few things are more interesting to read than the letters of someone we know only from his published works, and when the letters are those of such an engaging, lively personality as William James, the interest is compounded by the delight of a literate gracefulness of style and thought. Several volumes of his correspon-

dence are already in print, but these are nonetheless welcome for fleshing out the man and for following (particularly in the last decade) the unfolding and defense of his ideas about radical empiricism and truth.

Modern Atheism. Michael J. Buckley. Yale, 1987. $27.50.

In this interesting analysis, the argument is that atheistic thought took strength from a development within the community of religious thinkers: namely, the defense of religious ideas forsook the religious universe of discourse and its evidential claims by shifting over to philosophical and finally to scientific courts of appeal. Descartes, followed by Malbranche, asserted that God and the soul were philosophical, not theological, questions, whereas Newton, followed by Samuel Clarke, developed a natural theology based on his system of the world. The result was that the justification of religious belief became alienated—self-alienated—from the life of religiousness, and the debate became one between deism and atheism, both, as Pascal commented, equally far from faith. It was in this arena that Diderot and d'Holbach took up the battle. Buckley explores the writings of these pivotal thinkers (and some others) with impressive learning and care, especially Newton.

Natural Law and Justice. Lloyd L. Weinreb. Harvard, 1987. $25.

Classical natural law rested on a normative theory of nature and of human nature. Weinreb accepts the modern view that that foundation is no longer possible to accept—nature is the realm of causal necessity. But natural law remains as a task: the moral foundation of positive law is sought by political philosophy. Moral responsibility entails freedom, and, he contends, liberty and equality (desert and entitlement) are the normative equivalents of freedom and cause. He has many insightful critical things to say about Dworkin, Finnis, and the like but his own analysis concludes on a tentative note.

Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus. Charles L. Griswold, Jr. Yale, 1986. $29.50.

The *Phaedrus* is concerned with rhetoric and writing, and thus invites self-reference. The central merit of Griswold's meticulous analysis and discussion of the dialogue is that it keeps in view the dramatic structure of the text as the key to its interpretation. In contrast to Derrida and Rorty, the author takes Plato's *text* to succeed in addressing issues still present in our lives.

Intimations of Mortality. David Farrell Krell. Pennsylvania State Univ., 1986. $22.50.

Translator of several of Heidegger's major writings, Krell profits also from conversations with the German philosopher over several years in attempting a reading of the texts in the light of the fundamental experience from which they emerge. The reading is selective in the sense that there is no exegesis of whole works but rather an organizing of themes, from *Being and Time* onward. The fundamental experience is indicated in the title, and it is articulated in the themes of time, truth, and finitude that run through all his writing. Krell is a Heideggerian in some sense but no mere vassal, and his attempt at an overview is one of the best.

Streams of Experience. John J. McDermott. Univ. of Massachusetts, 1986. $22.50.

A collection of essays by a philosopher who thinks for himself in the classical tradition of American culture. The writing is lively and perceptive, the topics down-to-earth as well as intellectual. In some respects, we are far from James and Mead, Peirce and Royce, Emerson and Whitman—they seem at times to belong to another world—and yet in the hands of a thoughtful writer they can remind us of who we are. American life is characteristically less in conversation with (not about) its past than European cultures, but this cannot be to the advantage of our self-knowledge.

Anna J. Schwartz

The History of Statistics: The Measurement of Uncertainty before 1900. Stephen M. Stigler. Harvard (Belknap), 1986. $25.

This engaging study may captivate even those who have no affinity for the numerical. The author has a talent for lucidly explaining the intellectual challenges that faced statisticians of the 18th and 19th centuries and for making witty comments on their lives and foibles. The first of the book's two themes is that, by 1827, thanks to a conceptual structure that permitted the combination of observations and the use of probability to measure uncertainty, statistical techniques, including the method of least squares, were commonplace in astronomical and geodetic work. The second theme explores the reasons for the decades-long lag in the application of these techniques to the social sciences. The lag reflected the search for a suitable conceptual structure. For astronomy, it was the universal Newtonian laws. In psychology, experimental design substituted for Newtonian theory. More than an adaptation of least squares to biology and social sciences, laws of regression and correlation provided that structure by 1900. They made it possible to control for effects of measured variables in social and economic data and paved the way for the emergence of the modern discipline of statistics as a separate field.

Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism, 1860–1912. Lance E. Davis and Robert A. Huttenback. Cambridge Univ., 1986. $47.50.

J. A. Hobson and Lenin portrayed imperial expansion as a response to declining profit opportunities at home. For H. M. Stanley and G. B. Shaw the Empire provided new markets with profits that topped those available at home or in foreign parts that London did not control. To test these theories of Empire, the authors of this cliometric study have amassed information from official documents and records of about 500 companies in different industries, including the socioeconomic background of investors in Empire resident in London and outside. They classify the Empire as Britain itself, colonies with responsible government, all other colonial possessions, and India.

The authors generally reject the long-standing theories. They report that at no time and certainly not after the 1870s were Empire profits sufficient to underwrite British prosperity. Although rates of return on colonial investments initially exceeded those on domestic investments, for the remainder of the 19th century they were substantially below those available at home, but possibly equaled domestic earnings in the decade before the war. Only a small fraction of capital flows provided by the London market went to the Empire; most were absorbed by the colonies of white settlement that were not objects of British exploitation. Those colonies, moreover, actively pursued protectionist policies against British manufacturers and traders. British expenditures subsidized the Empire, the middle class bearing far more than its share of the subsidy, while profits accrued to the upper class. The authors' final words refer to Cecil Rhodes's comment that imperialism was nothing more than philanthropy plus 5 percent, following which they ask, "But philanthropy for whom?"

Banking on the World: The Politics of American International Finance. Jeffry A. Frieden. Harper & Row, 1987. $19.95.

In this primer of world financial markets, infused with a populist tinge, the author, a teacher of the politics of international economic relations, sketches U.S. participation in global banking since 1890. Initially, U.S. global banking was limited to the Caribbean area but after World War I, it supplied bond financing for the restructuring of European economies and the economic programs of Latin America. These forays ended in disaster for investors, as sovereign debtors defaulted in the Great Depression, and for the banks, which the New Deal blamed.

After World War II, the isolationism and protectionism of the interwar years were routed.

(continued on back cover)

Recommended Reading

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A political consensus formed to support the banks in championing the free movement of capital and goods and the integration of the United States into the world economy. As a result, both imports and exports increased, overseas investment grew, and the banks became avid lenders to the Third World. When the industrialized countries in the early 1980s adopted anti-inflationary measures, loans to both domestic and international borrowers soured, arousing fears for the safety of bank lenders. Lending halted and the Third World suffered. As foreign suppliers with cheap labor won significant market shares from U.S. manufacturing, U.S. firms and workers suffered. Should these circumstances persist, in the author's view, the consensus for economic internationalism would break down, evidenced by increasing demands for trade protection and government subsidies. Only if the domestic and international economies resume growth is there hope for the future of global financial integration.

The author concludes with a reference to "the losses inflicted on it [modern society] by unbridled market forces." The losses are unemployment and "the mills and farms abandoned to the vortex of international competitive pressures" (p. 245). Unbridled market forces are the forces driving modern international finance. The author does not, however, explain how "social and political forces" can harness the potential of modern international finance "for more general social purposes."

Leonard W. Doob

Conservation in Africa: Peoples, Policies, and Practice. Ed. by David Anderson and Richard Grove. Cambridge Univ., 1987. $54.50.

A superb collection of scholarly essays, principally by British historians, geographers, and anthropologists, that outline the ecological, economic, and political problems confronting the indigenous peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, with sustained attention on their forests, animals, and modes of existence. The goals and policies of governments (inherited usually from the colonial regimes), conservationists (including sometimes foresters), and above all the African pastoralists (who seldom profit from the growing tourist industry) have been and remain in serious conflict. The emerging, varying generalizations in this book are a challenge to look unromantically beyond, but certainly not to ignore, the tsetse fly, overgrazing, drought, famine, "fuelwood," growing populations, and the likes of publicized white hunters such as Theodore Roosevelt and Ernest Hemingway, in order to explain or assist this continent in crisis.

Psychology, Humanism, and Scientific Inquiry. Ed. by Albert H. Cantril. Transaction, 1988. $34.95.

An astute selection of Hadley Cantril's published essays, illustrating and documenting how that attractive, cheerful, versatile, restless, driven social psychologist sought to embrace, in his phrase, "the full gamut of human behavior." He would try again and again to obtain, as he liked to say, "a toehold" not only on subjects ranging from neurophysiology to faith but also on neo-humanists such as Polybius, William James, Lenin, Gandhi, Carl Sandburg, and Adelbert Ames. Public opinion surveys in the United States and elsewhere were one of his primary interests. Any readers seeking relief from the details of their own thinking can find illuminating, relaxing, perspicacious stimulation in Cantril's holistic "reaching for certain universals" that he himself never quite found because he knew that the "transactional" quest, though momentarily essential, is perhaps ultimately futile.

White Tribe Dreaming: Apartheid's Bitter Roots as Witnessed by Eight Generations of an Afrikaner Family. Marq de Villiers. Viking, 1988. $21.95.

A valiant, lively attempt by an Afrikaner now living in Canada to describe and explain the unusually long subtitle of his book. Despite a preliminary, modest disclaimer, huge gobs of past and recent South African history necessarily are interwoven with, in fact dominate, the story of the author's own ancestors and family. Myths are exploded, including the alleged unity of Afrikanerdom, relations among the original African ethnic groups, and the nature of the so-called Boer War. No simplified theory emerges from this event-packed, forthright, opinionated account; rather, more than a glimpse into Afrikaner mentality, values, and morality is provided. "The architects of apartheid weren't inventing a policy from thin air"; they were and are responding to past events and current challenges. The author concludes that apartheid is doomed, although an ultimate, satisfactory solution and particularly the means to achieve it remain, alas, elusive and uncertain.

The Drowned and the Saved. Primo Levi. Simon & Schuster, 1988. $17.95.

The final message of this Holocaust victim to his own generation and to those, especially Germans, who could and would forget or distort that atrocious period of European history. The brutal details of the camps he inevitably describes, but he emphasizes the insights that transcend the experience: the ways in which the "drifting of memory" falsifies past events; the "shame" (his word for guilt) that pervades the fortunate survivors as they contemplate the unfortunate who perished; the cultural norms affecting even the torturers and their temporarily seduced stooges (the "Kapos" recruited from the ranks of prisoners); the efforts of the evil ones to conceal their deeds; the resilience of human beings, including intellectuals, under impossible circumstances; and above all the potentiality even within the best of us, wittingly or unwittingly, to be or to behave like those Nazis. This sensitive, gifted Italian, who after liberation became a successful writer and industrial chemist, committed suicide shortly after completing this book. Why or—more of a challenge—why not?

Design for Cross-Cultural Learning. Mildred Sikkema and Agnes Niyekawa. Intercultural Press, 1987. $15.95.

A detailed blueprint for faculty members who would have their students learn actively rather than passively the subtleties of another society by living there from 12 to 14 months and thereby acquire insights into their own culture-bound values and themselves. The students attend informal, self-revealing seminars before, during, and after the experience abroad and of course mingle with citizens of the foreign country in which they submerge themselves. The philosophy and principles stem from current thinking in the social sciences and from the authors' own supervision of American and Hong Kong "social work" students who have lived overseas, principally in Guam. We have here no research in the conventional sense (e.g., no statistics, no control group), but a practical pedagogical plan and a series of moving and convincing vignettes.

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