38th Triennial Council Approves Seven New Chapters, Elects Crosson and Gordon, Votes for New Term Limits

CHICAGO PROVIDED A WEEKEND of perfect early autumn weather for the 420 delegates and others who assembled on September 25–28 for Phi Beta Kappa’s triennial Council.

Headquarters for the Council, which is Phi Beta Kappa’s legislative body, was the Hilton and Towers Hotel, within walking distance of the two receptions, one in the Winter Garden of the Harold Washington Library Center and the other at the Cliff Dwellers club. The hotel is also only a few blocks away from the most popular local attraction of all, Chicago’s Art Institute.

At the business sessions, all seven proposed chapters were approved. They will be established at Hendrix College; Lewis and Clark College; University of Maryland, Baltimore County; St. Mary’s College of Maryland; Spelman College; Western Michigan University; and Willamette University.

The delegates also approved constitutional amendments (1) to reduce the number of terms that Phi Beta Kappa senators can serve from three 6-year terms (18 years) to two consecutive terms (12 years) and (2) to allow for ex officio membership on the Senate for officers (i.e., the president and the vice president) who have completed two terms of service on the Senate.

The report of the Policy Committee was introduced by its chairman, Frederick Crosson, at the first plenary session and served to stimulate discussion all weekend. [Excerpts from the report appeared in the Summer 1997 Key Reporter.]

Elections

The nominees for president and vice president were elected by acclamation. Frederick Crosson, the new president, is Cavanaugh Distinguished Professor of Humanities at the University of Notre Dame. Joseph W. Gordon, the new vice president, is dean of undergraduate studies at Yale University. They will serve until 2000.

The delegates also elected eight senators at large and four district senators for six-year terms. The newly elected senators at large are Margaret Geller, professor of astronomy, Harvard University; and senior scientist, Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory; Condoleezza Rice, provost, Stanford University; and Pauline Yu, dean of humanities and professor of East Asian languages and culture, UCLA.

Senators at large who were re-elected are Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Foundation; Donald S. Lamm, chairman of W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.; David Levering Lewis, Martin Luther King Jr. University Professor of History, Rutgers University; Arnold S. Relman, professor emeritus of medicine, Harvard Medical School, and senior physician, Brigham & Women’s Hospital; and Catharine R. Stimpson, director of the Fellows Program, MacArthur Foundation.

The newly elected district senators are Alonzo L. Hamby, Distinguished Professor of History, Ohio University, for the East Central District; and Mary E. Thompson, professor of chemistry, College of St. Catherine, for the North Central District.

Reelected district senators are James P. Lusardi, March Professor of English, Lafayette College, for the Middle Atlantic District; and Gerald L. Alexanderson, Valeriote Professor of Science, Santa Clara University, for the Western District.

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PHK President Frederick Crosson, left, and Vice President Joseph Gordon at the Council banquet.
Four members were elected to serve on the Nominating Committee: Annemarie Weyl Carr, professor of art history, Southern Methodist University; Virginia R. Ferris, professor of entomology, Purdue University; Rámón Saldivar, professor of English and comparative literature, Stanford University; and Richard Wendorf, director and librarian, Boston Athenaeum.

Aubrey Farb, a member of the Houston association, was elected chairman of the Committee of Association Delegates. Barbara Marmorstein, of the Delaware Valley association, was elected secretary.

The Panel Discussion

It was standing room only in the large hall set aside for the first special event of the Council—a panel discussion—on Thursday afternoon, September 25. The topic, “Liberal Education: The Role of Phi Beta Kappa,” was tackled from different perspectives by a half-dozen speakers, who provided fodder for two afternoons’ worth of small-group discussions.

Chaired by Richard Ekman, secretary of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the panel consisted of the following participants: Dennis O’Brien, president emeritus of the University of Rochester; two chapter representatives, Thomas Bell, of the University of Tennessee, and Cheryl Foster, of the University of Rhode Island; one association representative, Christel McDonald, of the Washington, D.C., area group; David Warren, of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; and Stephen Martin, a 1991 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Williams College. [Excerpts from two of these presentations appear on pages 4–7. Two others, on the life of the chapters and the associations, will appear in the Winter 1997-98 issue.]

The Small-Group Sessions

Both Friday and Saturday afternoons were devoted to small-group sessions on the three topics that are the focus of the report of the Policy Committee—the life of the chapters, the role of the associations, and liberal education—as well as such topics as the Society’s program in the secondary schools; the use of World Wide Web pages by chapters, associations, and the national office; the problems posed to chapters by branch campuses, distance learning, and part-time study; and membership eligibility and election practices.

Many chapter representatives expressed surprise at learning about the variety of activities the associations were already carrying out, and expressed an interest in using association volunteers to help with recruitment of initiates. Other chapter representatives cited their efforts to increase their visibility on campus, such as enlisting the college or university president in promoting Phi Beta Kappa and distributing to freshmen brief outlines of Phi Beta Kappa’s requirements for membership.

Many of the participants in the small groups noted that they felt “energized” by the discussions of what other Phi Beta Kappa groups were doing, and some planned, for example, to try to institute selection of Phi Betes in their junior year to take advantage of youth leadership and to tap association members who are prominent outside academe as speakers on campus.

The Banquet

At the banquet in the Hilton’s Grand Ballroom on Saturday, September 27, three presentations were made:

• Bill and Judith Moyers received the annual Phi Beta Kappa Associates Award in recognition of their outstanding work in the preparation and presentation of public interest documents. Each accepted the award with a brief and gracious response.

• Joseph Epstein, who retires in December after 23 years as editor of the American Scholar, received the Phi Beta Kappa Award for Distinguished Service to the Humanities. In
his response, Epstein discussed with wry humor the banishment of his alter ego, Aristides “the Just,” the name under which he wrote his popular essays for the Scholar.

- Author and educator Carolyn Heilbrun received the Sidney Hook Memorial Award, which underwrites a lecture at the Council banquet by a distinguished teacher and scholar. Her after-dinner talk was titled “Concerning ‘Unmitigated Masculinity.’”

Tribute to American Scholar Editor

Charles Blitzer, Outgoing ΦΒΚ President, Presents Award to Joseph Epstein for Distinguished Service to Humanities

Against the fashion of the age, which is so impatient with tradition, Joseph Epstein has shown in his work, and in a voice attuned at once to the day’s events and to the enduring echo of the past, how nuanced and expansive a life can be lived within a tradition. In fact, he has set himself squarely within several traditions—the tradition of Western classicism, the tradition of the literature of personal statement, the tradition of the English essay—and he has drawn upon each to honor all three.

Joe Epstein has been most notably himself while in disguise, wearing the cloak of Aristides. The assumption of a pseudonymous literary self is another tradition, of course, and the name in this instance is especially resonant. Mr. Epstein no doubt had a single Aristides in mind when he took the identity, but the name attaches to at least three individuals of note from the ancient world, and their composite identity is rich indeed. The three are scattered across almost seven centuries: an Athenian politician of the 5th century B.C., a sophist of the 2nd century A.D., and an eroticist of the 2nd century B.C.

Of the last, alas, we know the least, though his work, happily, was notorious and survives in part in “The Golden Ass.” Of the Athenian politician, traditions relate that he was a hero at Marathon, that he was famous for being just, and that he was ostracized by his fellow citizens—sent into exile for behavior that annoyed them. The textually prolific sophist was probably a hypochondriac and found his best subject not in the age of the Antonines but in himself, as the author of a spiritual autobiography that recorded the interventions of the god Asclepius in his life.

Joe Epstein attached the ancient name to his entirely contemporary self and in the process kept several traditions vital. His favored form is the personal essay. The modern tradition of the essay goes back to the wise and candid Montaigne, whose best subject, for Aristides the sophist, and Aristides the editor, was himself. Montaigne knew that, if you read each page of the self carefully enough, and parse its every means of expression, your lone subject will become universal. The personal essay extends in the English tradition through Bacon and Cowley and

Other Business

President Crosson recognized more than 50 chapter members attending the Council as delegates or alternate delegates, each of whom had served as a chapter officer for 10 years or more. Each will receive a plaque.

Several resolutions were presented, including one calling on chapters to promote discussion of liberal education on their campuses and one endorsing a continuation of the Society’s institutes for secondary school teachers.

The delegates observed a moment of silence in memory of three national officers who died during the triennium:


Addison and Steele and Fielding and Johnson and Lamb and Macaulay and Steven son and Arnold. The noble list is merely partial and does not even reach the 20th century, during which others have staked a claim to inclusion. But at the century’s end, no name fits more comfortably into the chronicle of the great tradition than that of Joseph Epstein.

Through his distinguished editorship of the American Scholar for more than 20 years, through his writings and speeches, through his teaching, he has done perhaps more than anyone else of his generation to keep alive the love of letters and of civil discourse on an astonishing range of topics.

A few years ago, departing from his generally cheerful persona, he speculated somewhat gloomily in the New York Times about whether an audience still existed, and would continue to exist, for the sort of serious and felicitous writing to which he has devoted so much of his life. This is unfortunately an all too salient question. If the answer is to be affirmative, if this critical element and goal of humanistic learning is to survive, that happy outcome will depend upon the continuing contributions of Joe Epstein and others who have earned the honorable but disappearing title, Man of Letters.

In recognition of his contributions, and with high hopes that they will continue, Phi Beta Kappa is proud to present to Joseph Epstein its Award for Distinguished Service to the Humanities.
Two Presentations from the Panel Discussion on The Role of Phi Beta Kappa in Liberal Education

By Richard H. Ekman, Secretary, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The theme of the Council's opening session, "Liberal Education: The Role of Phi Beta Kappa," is derived from the thought-provoking report of Phi Beta Kappa's Policy Committee that was sent to all delegates in advance of this meeting. The report makes three recommendations. Two are directed to the improved efficiency of Phi Beta Kappa as an organization: that Phi Beta Kappa needs to concern itself with the lives of its chapters and that Phi Beta Kappa needs to concern itself with the role of its associations. The third recommendation looks to broader educational issues: that Phi Beta Kappa needs to concern itself with liberal education.

Broad as these recommendations are, I think it might be even more useful to discuss how Phi Beta Kappa could focus its energies within an even wider frame of reference. I say this because, in all likelihood, any provisional conclusions reached in these discussions will depend in large part on who else in the pantheon of scholarly and educational organizations is attempting to do similar things, how well they are doing them, and what Phi Beta Kappa's distinctive strengths and comparative advantages might be.

It bears repeating that small, private undergraduate institutions in which the liberal arts are among the most popular or the dominant fields of study are a much smaller percentage of all colleges and universities today than they were even a generation ago. One question that immediately follows is how Phi Beta Kappa can have more influence in institutions that are very large and populated mostly by students who do not study the liberal arts. Should Phi Beta Kappa assume that it has a limited role in such places, and should it be content to operate primarily in the kinds of institutions where it is already a familiar presence?

Or is the problem more fundamental? That is, does the American public respect intellectual achievement less than it once did, and therefore—despite anything Phi Beta Kappa might do or not do—will Phi Beta Kappa inevitably be pigeonholed by observers as elitist or old-fashioned? To what extent does public sentiment (undeniably critical of higher education and focused on such issues as rising tuition charges and the perception that faculty spend too little time in the classroom) make it more difficult for Phi Beta Kappa to make the case for honoring intellectual achievement?

Alternatively, is what Phi Beta Kappa has long stood for—respect for academic achievement and the centrality of the liberal arts in undergraduate education—now so widely diffused into the work of other organizations that Phi Beta Kappa has lost its singular identification with these purposes? And what, if anything, can be done about that?

Taking advantage of the prerogative of the moderator to insert his own views into the discussion, let me try to answer the three questions I have just posed:

First, yes, indeed, the institutional landscape has changed, but to aggregate all these changes into comprehensive generalizations can be misleading. Obscured, for example, is the fact that institutions with the most dramatic recent increases in admissions numbers and quality are those with reputations for strength in the liberal arts. Moreover, there is some evidence from recent studies to suggest that earning high grades, attending a selective college, and majoring in a field of the liberal arts all correlate with high levels of professional achievement, personal fulfillment, civic involvement, and high postcollege income. In other words, the values of Phi Beta Kappa appear to be acknowledged in the ways the world actually works.

Second, is the problem really reflective of a shift in public attitudes about the importance of learning and intellectual achievement? Here the evidence is ambiguous. To be sure, winners of Nobel and Pulitzer prizes still get noticed—as do the winners of the MacArthur Foundation's "genius" awards. But there hasn't been, for a very long time, a scholar-politician with the stature of a Woodrow Wilson or a James A. Garfield (who, it was said, could simultaneously write Latin with his left hand and Greek with his right hand). And the news reporting about last year's National Spelling Bee winner practically ignored the fact that this 12-year-old girl could spell very difficult words, and focused instead on the fact that she had been homeschooled and exhibited unusual facial expressions and speaking mannerisms. Even more symptomatic, perhaps, of the declining respect for intellectual achievement is the evidence inside the academy: In this week's Chronicle of Higher Education, no less distin-
guished a scholar than UCLA's Alexander Astin argues in an essay that "our obsession with being 'smart' is distorting intellectual life."

Which brings me to the third of the questions: Is Phi Beta Kappa's distinctive role in the past of "honoring and encouraging achievement in the liberal arts and sciences, especially in undergraduate education," now so widely shared with other organizations as to have weakened Phi Beta Kappa itself? The good news is that many organizations have enlisted in the cause of liberal education. The Association of American Colleges and Universities and the newer American Academy for Liberal Education both focus exactly on this purpose, while the list of organizations with other main purposes but significant programmatic efforts in this territory includes—to name only a few—the American Council of Learned Societies, the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, and the American Association for Higher Education.

However, Phi Beta Kappa does have some distinctive advantages over other national organizations:

1. It is large and well established, with local, regional, and national infrastructures. None of the other organizations comes close to Phi Beta Kappa in this respect.

2. There is almost no ambiguity about what Phi Beta Kappa stands for.

3. It is very strong financially in comparison with most of the others. (I recognize that from inside Phi Beta Kappa, there never seems to be enough money or staff, but, believe me, Phi Beta Kappa has resources most others do not.)

4. It provides, or at least has the potential to offer, communities of shared interest that mitigate, to some extent, one of the major complaints about big universities—namely, the lack of a collegial atmosphere. The popularity of honors colleges responds to the same need, I suspect.

5. Phi Beta Kappa has alumni in every walk of life. Approximately 90 percent of Phi Beta Kappa members are not professional academics.

All of these factors lead me to conclude that Phi Beta Kappa has a powerful role to play in the strengthening of liberal education, and could become a leader of such efforts. Because the results of any such efforts will, in turn, further strengthen Phi Beta Kappa, the connection between Phi Beta Kappa and the advancement of liberal education is, in my view, almost symbiotic.

By Dennis O'Brien, President Emeritus, University of Rochester

Because the motto of Phi Beta Kappa is "philosophia biou kubernete: philosophy the guide of life," I want to explore the philosophies that have guided the life of Phi Beta Kappa. Specifically, because Phi Beta Kappa is a scholastic honor society, how have the philosophies of the schools affected the "honor" recognized by election and the key?

There are many philosophies of many schools, but the one that runs its rocky course through the history of the Society is the philosophy of liberal education. Repeatedly the Society has had to reexamine and redefine itself, as colleges have shifted from the classical curriculum of Greek and Latin to the scientific paradigm of the research university, to the antilalist educational manifestos of the 1960s, to the careerist aspirations of the 1990s. How has liberal education survived all these changes, and how does Phi Beta Kappa honor fit within the shifting ideologies of higher education?

No one should even dream of discussing the notion of the liberal arts without absorbing the lessons of _Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education_ by Bruce Kimball. As the title indicates, he describes two quite different traditions operating under the slogan of the liberal arts: the position of the orators and the position of the philosophers. The orator is interested in _passing on_ a moral and civic tradition _already_ established. The philosopher seeks a culture that is not merely a reiteration of the historical tribe but one's own individual achievement. Kimball labels this latter view the "liberal free" definition of the liberal arts.

Given Kimball's distinction, it is clear that Phi Beta Kappa was established firmly within the _oratorical_ tradition. The institution of origin, the College of William and Mary, was founded in 1693 in order "that the youth may be pious in their letters and manners. . . . to the glory of the Almighty." "Good letters and manners" were inculcated through the reading of classical languages and the practice of that oratorical excellence that was to bless America with the splendid rhetoric of the nation's Founding Fathers.

John Heath, the founding father of Phi Beta Kappa, was "the son of a prominent Virginia gentleman . . . excellently tutored in Greek as well as Latin [who] took particular pride in his reputation as a Hellenist. . . . Heath created Phi Beta Kappa in 1776 to further "friendship, morality, and literature." This founding motto reflects the oratorical tradition. Classic literature offered exemplars of morality and created the true friendship granted specially to the morally educated. The selection for Phi Beta Kappa, the honor conferred, was thus not a recognition of academic achievement narrowly construed but a recognition of gentlemanly cultivation.

One of the many crises in the history of Phi Beta Kappa was the initiation of numerical grades at Yale in 1813. Instead of the vaguely evaluative categories previously in place—students were designated best, second best, good, worst—students could now be numerically ranked. Thus began the process that converted the student-gentleman into a grade-point average. But numerical grading was only a minor dent in the oratorical tradition; the revolutionary change came with the emergence of scientific studies on a broad scale, accomplished by the adoption of the elective system as a means of bypassing the required classical curriculum. Science was not just added to the curriculum; an ideology of science as critique above and beyond historical tradition came to dominate the philosophy of the schools. Descartes, the father of modern philosophy and the spiritual progenitor of the liberal free ideal, clearly expressed the contrast between the new scientific spirit and the old oratorical tradition:

I esteemed eloquence highly, and was in raptures with poesy; but I thought that both were gifts of nature rather than the fruits of study. Those in whom the faculty of reason is predominant, and who most skilfully dispose their thoughts to render them clear and intelligible, are always the best able to persuade others of the truth that they lay down, though they should speak only in the language of Lower Britain . . . .

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For Descartes, mathematics was the paradigm of rationality—knowledge based on intuitions of pure reason quite transcendent to any culture, history, time, place, or local language. Descartes called everything in doubt except what could be deduced from pure reason. The Cartesian transcendent urge expanded into the Enlightenment idea that truth transcends tradition whether its ultimate foundation remains in some Cartesian rational intuition or the empiricist's appeal to direct sense experience.

The Enlightenment position is fundamental to the "liberal free" notion of the liberal arts. Kimball notes seven marks of the liberal free ideal that should sound very familiar to anyone conversant with late-20th-century higher education rhetoric: freedom from a priori standards, rationality, critical skepticism, tolerance, egalitarianism, volition of the individual, and pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself.

The difference between orators and philosophers can be made clearer by considering degenerate forms of each. Each tradition has its peculiar temptation. The oratorical tradition risks moving from cultivation to "cultism." One need only examine the academic and religious rigidity of the 19th-century denominational colleges or the past social snobbbery of the elite universities to see that the temptation to cult and "our crowd" has not been avoided.

If the oratorical tradition degenerates into dogmatic cultism, the liberal free tradition risks degeneration into empty skepticism. One can see the risk of such a destructive outcome in Descartes' original project. Descartes was into wholesale doubt looking for a wholesale, once-and-for-all ground of truth. The philosophers of the Enlightenment all shared the Cartesian project, though they were deeply divided about whether the grand solution was found in God, reason, or sensations. But what if there is no grand solution? What if all this quarreling over the great foundation of truth suggests that there is no such thing? In that case one is back with wholesale doubt and radical skepticism.

The philosopher Hegel saw the French Revolution as mindless egalitarianism, the destruction of distinction as a direct result of the inevitable failure the Enlightenment project. In a radically skeptical world, all cows are equally black in the night of unknowing. One might regard some of the radical movements on the university campuses during the 1960s as a sort of academic French Revolution. What is characteristic of the liberal free ideal and of the revolutions it encourages for good and for ill is the grounding of truth and value beyond history and tradition.

One of the most powerful weapons against political or academic Bourbons is to deny that history gives legitimacy. Just because Louis sits on the throne of power or Aristotle on the seat of learning means nothing in the light of pure reason or sheer fact. For some of the '60s radicals, real learning was not in established texts and teachers but in sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll—getting high as a path to the transcendent!

If the ideology of the school shifts from orators to philosophers, from cultivation to critique, what becomes of scholastic honor? In the oratorical tradition, achievement rested on mastery of a body of historical "literature" as the "scholastic" ground for morality and friendship. After 1813, mastery could be measured and ranked by numerical grades. As faculties took over the authority to elect to Phi Beta Kappa during the first half of the 19th century, student friendship faded as a consideration. Eventually, scholastic achievement became the dominant if not the sole mark of honor.

But by then scholastic achievement faced the wide open range of the new elective curriculum. What subjects must have been taken to qualify for election? Johns Hopkins University from 1896 elected M.D. graduates to Phi Beta Kappa, and when inquiry was made to the United Chapters about whether other colleges were extending membership in this fashion, it was decided that no one knew. The history of the Society in the 20th century can be read as a series of repeated and complex attempts to define a liberal arts component necessary for election or for the establishment of a chapter.

If the two traditions have a degenerate interpretation, so does honor. In the oratorical tradition, what is truly honorable is the facility to bring a powerful moral and civic tradition to bear upon the present. There is a scholastic base to the honor but the learning involved must issue in moral community—originally, friendship—not knowledge for its own sake. The oratorical ideal can degenerate into honoring merely friendship, but Phi Beta Kappa may have avoided that degeneration by grace of the fraternity movement in which friendship, often of just our crowd, became the basis for association.

Honor in the liberal free model almost inevitably shifts to classroom achievement, grades, rank in class, with a continuing puzzle about just which subjects are "liberal." One degeneration would be to accept any old rank regardless of subjects learned, but the Society has struggled to maintain an emphasis on humanistic studies. In a radical "degeneration" of the liberal free model, the...
Society utterly disappears, along with all honor and distinction, into the void of dogmatic egalitarianism.

I hardly expect to solve the modern puzzle of the liberal arts and Phi Beta Kappa in the moments provided on this panel, but I suggest that Kimball’s dichotomy—profoundely learned and useful as it is—is too restrictive. There is at least one other possible liberal arts tradition that needs to be recognized. In Kimball’s analysis, orators aim at cultivation in a tradition, while philosophers critique tradition from a transcendent point of view. A third view critiques tradition but from within tradition, not from above.

In a 1963 article, “On the Sources of Knowledge and of Ignorance,” Karl Popper criticizes the very philosophers whom he admires for their contributions to democratic politics, because of their false and dangerous view that truth is “manifest.” Yes, it can be a powerful political weapon against entrenched tyranny to cite the self-evident truth that all men are created equal, but Popper thinks that truth is never self-evident, never manifest. He concludes his article in a strikingly anti-Enlightenment statement:

Quantiatively and qualitatively by far the most important source of our knowledge...is tradition...The fact that most of the sources of our knowledge are traditional condemns anti-traditionalism as futile. But this fact must not be held to support a traditionalist attitude: every bit of our traditional knowledge...is open to critical examination and may be overthrown. Nevertheless, without tradition, knowledge would be impossible.5

Popper is advocating tradition as the indispensable source of knowledge, but only a tradition under continual self-scrutiny. I think not only that Popper is correct, but that he actually offers a better description about what we actually do in the modern college and university than the overheated liberal free rhetoric that we frequently hear in the pontifications of collegiate prose.

A question this leaves is the notion of Phi Beta Kappa scholastic honor within Popper’s self-critical tradition. I offer one suggestion of an exclusionary nature. If Popper’s description is correct, then those subjects are “liberal” that emerge from and engage deeply with a tradition of accomplishment and critique. So-called vocational disciplines fail to meet that criterion. I may learn to program in Pascal—not a negligible skill—but not only have no idea why it is named PASCAL but be blissfully ignorant of the deep traditions of mathematics and physics that underlie the skill. I will certainly be in no position to critique the skill because I am ignorant of its fundamental structures; at best I am like a superficial product of the oratorical tradition: I can manipulate the language but without understanding its power and place.

Phi Beta Kappa may no longer begin with gentlemanly “friendship,” but it does espouse a deep friendship of all the generations of scholars, those morally committed to the conversation and critique that great traditions demand for their preservation and further life.

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5From a book of readings prepared by the Educational Leadership Program of the Christian A. Johnson Foundation.

Letters to the Editor

‘The Disappearing Moral Curriculum’

With regard to Dennis O’Brien’s article on the disappearing moral curriculum [Key Reporter, Summer 1997], I’d like to ask how O’Brien’s “moral historicism”—a looking to the past for moral recovery—can help us to distinguish what is good and what is bad in our past, to discriminate between good and evil traditions.

Perhaps O’Brien’s insight may be absorbed by relegating it to the realm of lower education, in which a tradition and canon of great works are of greatest utility. Perhaps children ought not to be encouraged to question authority or to invent their own moral systems.

But adult college students are another matter entirely. Higher education is the appropriate place for metaethics, for self-conscious critical reflection on the nature and justification of morals, and it is here that an attitude of discovery (or creativity) is just as appropriate as an attitude of recovery. It would be premature at this time in human history to preclude the possibility of enlightening discovery in morals.

Rick Repetti, Brooklyn, N.Y.

As a freshman at Middlebury College, I had the good fortune to enroll in Dean Dennis O’Brien’s introductory philosophy course. My good fortune was doubled when I was assigned to his discussion group. Within six weeks I had decided that I must change my academic plans and major in philosophy. I have never regretted this decision. I hold a doctorate in clinical psychology and practice that profession; however, I regularly see the influence of my studies in philosophy on my professional work.

Imagine my delight at receiving the summer issue and finding Dr. O’Brien’s article. His broad-ranging thought, incisive analysis, and wit transported me back to a lecture hall in Vermont in 1974, to the course in which I first learned that philosophy is indeed the rudder of life.

Thank you.

Paul Cody, Pittsfield, N.H.

What Dr. O’Brien fails to realize in his bemoaning of the end of value-laden education is that the statement in the Gettysburg College catalog, and similar statements in other college catalogs, are not decontextualized words but the products of and responses to real social environments.

When a liberal education is said to promote “open-mindedness,” it is in relation to academic atmospheres which promote closed narratives of human experience. When a liberal education is said to foster “mutual respect,” it is in relation to cultural forces which have worked against such respect and have knowingly or unknowingly contributed to sexism, racism, and a whole series of other “isms.”

When a liberal education is said to promote “empathetic understanding,” it does so in the context of political, economic, and social climates which often thrive on the creation of false dichotomies, exclusivist self-constructions, and a fetishizing of competitiveness.

In other words, what Dr. O’Brien sees as a “disappearing moral curriculum” is simply a different moral curriculum.

Craig Prentiss, Kansas City, Mo.

Dr. O’Brien would have us find morality only in the Western tradition and only within a canonical framework. Yet agreement on a canon is surely impossible during a time when we are broadening our world view. To call for the narrowing of our exploration at this moment is to support two short-sighted propositions: (1) that the Western canon had at one time, and still has, a monopoly on “practical wisdom” and (2) that we should, like Macaulay in the 19th century, look no further than our own bookshelves.

Janet M. Powers, Gettysburg, Penna.

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Dennis O’Brien responds:

Professor Repetti’s thoughtful comments reflect the confusing state of ethical discourse. *Metaethics* is an academic specialist’s term referring to a search for some absolutely *basic* ethical principle (e.g., the greatest good for the greatest number). Whatever the value of such foundational studies, the principles announced are always of such generality that they settle no specific moral issues. One never wins a point with a truculent teen or a cantankerous colleague by appealing to “metaethics.”

Real-life moral discourse occurs within historical traditions: sorting out conflicts with alien practices or traditions, or incongruities in one’s traditions. One may and should take up a “meta”/reflective stance on moral traditions, but this involves not a leap above tradition to some transcendent principle, but the detailed sorting and sifting of the accomplishments and failures of actual historical practices and justifications. It is not only in physics that “God is in the details.”

On “discovery in morals”: It all depends on where you place the “discovery.” One could say, I suppose, that slavery was abolished when we “discovered” that blacks were human beings. On the other hand, the moral principle was the same old principle of justice—treating like cases alike and different cases differently. I would prefer to speak of *discernment* rather than *discovery*. What I find implausible is that we will “discover” a novel moral principle that transcends justice as the germ theory of disease transcended the theory of humors.

Professor Prentiss is quite correct that contemporary “catalogues” calling for “open-mindedness,” “mutual respect,” “empathy,” and so on is a response to “real social environments.” He is also correct in naming those environments: sexism, racism, and other “-isms.” The question that I would raise is why these new contexts, given their contemporary importance, remain unstated.

It seems that haste to alter prior “classical” context has led to the decontextualization rather than recontextualization to specifiable new conditions. Take one important example: “Diversity” has become a goal for higher education. What sort of diversity? The specific moral context (unstated) is the admission to the class and the curriculum of America’s traditional second- (or third-) class citizens: blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and, in a different sense, women.

An institution that proclaimed diversity because of a complex curriculum of arts, sciences, vocational training, and professional studies, or because of a highly diverse and large population of foreign students, would not be “diverse” in the context intended. “Diversity” as a mere slogan fails, then, to direct attention to the compelling contexts rightly identified by Professor Prentiss.

In response to Professor Powers, I would not claim that the Western tradition is superior or has a “monopoly on practical wisdom.” What makes the Western tradition important for American students is that it is our tradition. The Western tradition is embedded in our language, perceptions of art, commercial life, and so on. If we are not self-conscious about the embedded character of the Western tradition, we are more than likely to unconsciously read other powerful and capacious traditions with Western bias.

While it is enormously important to look beyond our own Western bookshelves, if we are not fluent in our own tradition we will surely garble any other tradition. It would be as if I were to translate from my bad German into my fair French. By all means let us learn what Krishna said to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, but I hope we would learn first and well what Lincoln said on the battlefield of Gettysburg.

Still More on the Key

Reading the letters in the summer issue about the Phi Beta Kappa key and what it means to some of its wearers, I thought your readers might be interested in another story.

I had certainly heard of Phi Beta Kappa when I entered Harvard in 1934, and I no doubt aspired to membership for at least the first months of my freshman year. However, it was not long before I realized that it was unlikely that I would achieve it. Although I graduated *cum laude*, I did not come close to Phi Beta Kappa.

At my 50th reunion, in 1988, one of my classmates told me that I had just been elected to this distinguished company! It was particularly surprising, since I had no idea that election could occur other than while one was in college. Nor have I ever heard on what basis I was elected. But I was amazed to discover how pleased I was about it, even if it was fifty years late!

I bought the key, but I have never worn it. I somehow think it is not seemly to display my membership when it took me so long to get elected.

Wilson V. Binger, New York, N.Y.

Thirty years ago, as a professor who had recently moved from the University of Wisconsin—Madison to Johns Hopkins University, I was made an honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa’s Alpha Chapter of Maryland. Despite having already received many honors, including the presidency of three national professional organizations and inclusion in *Who’s Who in America*, I was thrilled. During all the years since graduating from a college that did not have a φbk chapter, I’d envied my friends who had earned the wonderful key.

Then, as secretary and later president of the JHU chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, I helped offer membership to several internationally renowned JHU professors, including a member of the National Academy of Sciences. All were delighted to accept.

Like many others, I strongly endorse not charging φbk initiates anything. Charitable bequests in our wills could create endowment funds for this. I shall investigate that possibility at Johns Hopkins.

Julian C. Stanley, Baltimore, Md.

I cannot refrain from adding a few comments on my experience in being inducted, in 1977, into Phi Beta Kappa and the question of the key. It could never have happened when I was an undergraduate, class of 1952 at Harvard; there were just too many really impressive minds among my peers, all far more deserving.

However, at my 25th reunion, when I was asked to perform as part of Harvard night at the Boston Pops as one of the very few professional musicians in my class, I recall playing Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 plus the Poulenc Harpsichord “Concert Champetre” at Symphony Hall under Arthur Fiedler, and coming back to the Yard to find a letter under my dorm door. I was invited to be a guest at the annual meeting of the Alpha of Massachusetts chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at Harvard University the next morning.

Tired from the rehearsing and at the same time invigorated by the class reaction (the class had never heard me in a performing capacity when I was an undergraduate), I wanted nothing so much as to “flake out” the next morning at the poolside of the country club, a relaxing day which the reunion committee had scheduled for us. Afraid that, if I attended the meeting, I might not ever be able to get to the club, I called up the Harvard chapter secretary, who eased my mind by telling me that I should definitely forget
about the meeting and go on with the rest of my class to the country club.

Much later that afternoon, a classmate greeted me with “Congratulations.” Thinking he was referring to the previous evening’s music, I thanked him, but there was something about his response and tone that caused me to inquire, “What for?”

“You were elected honorary Phi Beta Kappa this morning,” he smiled at me. I could not believe it! Another classmate confirmed the news, and, of course, I felt that I was an idiot for not having attended the meeting. Fearing that I might lose it all, I literally raced to the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa office in the Yard and hurriedly handed the secretary my check for the membership. (He told me, with some amusement, that he had never before received an acceptance acknowledgment and check so quickly.)

Oh, yes… the key. When it arrived, I attached it to the watch chain on the vest that I wear as part of my formal performing attire. It became a proud symbol for me, and I delight in having been given it.

Igor Kipnis, West Redding, Conn.

A few weeks before my 50th reunion at Dartmouth College, I received a letter from an official of Phi Beta Kappa there saying I had been elected to membership, apparently for lifetime achievement. It asked, in by far the most rhetorical question I’ve ever been asked, whether I would accept! I know of no honor I have ever cherished more. The letter also asked if I would speak to the newly elected undergraduate members at their investiture.

My hastily assembled remarks were largely about my youthful strong desire to be a Phi Bete and why I missed that honor by perhaps half a point. In those days we believed that “irrelevant” knowledge was the hallmark of a liberal education. Therefore, although I majored in mathematics, I took several “irrelevant” courses, such as the music department’s Introduction to Harmony, at which I was the only nonmusician present.

I passed these courses, but just barely, thus lowering my hitherto high GPA just enough to miss Phi Beta Kappa standing. I explained that although I was saddened by that, I have never for one moment regretted studying and enormously enjoying those “irrelevant” courses. They have enlivened and delighted my life for the ensuing 56 years.

No key was given me, only instruction on how to send off a check to obtain one. I didn’t. The honor was most deeply prized, perhaps too deeply to be diluted by purchasing and flaunting its token.

George Herman [CBS News, retired],
Washington, D.C.

The day I received my Phi Beta Kappa key was one of the proudest days of my life. It still is. Even though I was immediately advised not to mention it on my résumé (I still do) or in a job interview because it might make someone “nervous,” those invited to join who don’t understand what that means should be sent copies of the letters in the *Key Reporter* from those who do.

Doria Steedman, New York, N.Y.

It was not boom times when I graduated from Hobart College in 1934 and walked away with nothing except a Phi Beta Kappa key in my pocket. After two years of odd jobs and a little graduate work, I landed a position with the Connecticut Fish and Game Department. $1,500 a year, car required. My father managed to borrow $250 to buy me an old Chrysler.

I arrived in Hartford on March 1, 1936, as they dug out from the worst flood in decades, to learn that they paid once a month. It was a bit rough, but I twice pawned the key for, if I remember correctly, three dollars, which, in those days, bought several loaves of bread.

Dean Amadon, Tenafly, N.J.

About Honorary Membership

There are three types of members of Phi Beta Kappa: members in course (student members), alumni members, and honorary members. Almost all members elected each year are members in course, usually selected from the top tenth of the graduating class, although a few graduate students are also selected. **Alumni/alumnae members** are elected from among the graduates of the institution sheltering a chapter. Ordinarily, they will have graduated at least 10 years previously and are recognized for scholarly accomplishment after graduation.

When a new chapter is granted to an institution, the new chapter often chooses to induct a few alumni/alumnae from previous generations who would have merited membership if there had been a chapter at the time they graduated.

**Honorary members** are elected from outside the student and alumni bodies of the sheltering institution and are chosen on substantially the same basis as alumni/alumnae members. Woodrow Wilson is an example of a person who attended an institution that had a chapter—Princeton University—but was not elected as an undergraduate; he received honorary membership from the Wesleyan University chapter for his scholarly achievements while on the faculty there. Professor Stanley (see Letters) exemplifies another group of members who attended colleges that did not have chapters and were selected for membership while on the faculty of universities that do.

The frequency with which chapters choose to bestow alumni/alumnae or honorary memberships varies considerably; some choose a few particularly distinguished persons each year, often from reunion classes, while other chapters never do.
turned to the importance of recognizing such achievement by young people in order to encourage their further scholarly pursuits. Papier agreed and mentioned his own disappointment in being denied such recognition when he graduated 65 years earlier.

An OSU faculty member at the table—Professor Frank Carroll, of the Mathematics Department—was amazed at the story and asked Papier for details. Some time afterward, Papier was notified by the university that the 1932 circumstances had been reviewed and he was now invited to join Phi Beta Kappa, albeit belatedly. And so, at age 87, he was happy to become a member.

Saul J. Blaustein, Tucson, Ariz.

As a married father of two working for a large corporation, I must admit that I have little time to contemplate what being Phi Beta Kappa really means. My days are dominated by work and family demands. Many of the articles in the Key Reporter are, quite frankly, over my head or well outside my realm of interests. I have virtually no contact with the “intellectual community,” and my PBK key sits in a drawer with some other treasures.

Last Christmas, however, my wife ordered a framed Phi Beta Kappa certificate complete with another key hanging from a crimson-and-gray ribbon representing Washington State University’s colors (ΦBK, 1975). I opened it and was immediately overwhelmed by emotion. I thought about all of the long hours of study, all of the tests, the hot summers spent working in manual labor, and the scrimping and saving to put myself through college. And I thought about my ancestors who had come to this country and toiled as miners, farmers, brickmasons, homemakers to provide a better life for descendants they might never know.

I will cherish this honor and try to live up to its obligations as long as I live.

Marc Anderson, Vancouver, Wash.

When I told them I could not afford the membership fee, they paid it for me. In fact, they purchased my key as well.

If it had not been for the impression that Phi Beta Kappa had made on my parents’ generation, I would have never accepted membership. Phi Beta Kappa must reach out to new generations of students through a creative presence on high school and college campuses. We must be viewed as relevant to future students by offering scholarships, lectures, academic competitions/debates, and timely seminars. If these activities had occurred on my high school or college campus, I would have realized what an honor it was to be asked to join.

Membership fees for new inductees need to be eliminated. I agree with Edward K. Markell [Key Reporter, Spring 1997] that sustaining membership fees should be raised to eliminate the burden of membership fees on new inductees.

I can only guess the identity of my academic sponsor because he/she never mentioned that he/she thought I had reached any standard of excellence. The Society needs to encourage college faculty members to inform students who have been recommended for Phi Beta Kappa membership. By doing so, the faculty share their excitement about the Society while applauding students on their academic achievements.

Charles Courtset, Rochester, N.Y.

Like most members, I believe that one of the proudest moments of my life was when I was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1979]. I frequently wore the key on a chain around my neck.

In 1981 I changed employers and continued the practice of wearing my key frequently, until one day when I was called into the office of a manager in the company, who told me that my flaunting of the key was engendering ill will among my co-workers, who felt I was showing off. I am somewhat ashamed to say I never again wore my key.

The good news is, I still work for that company, and today that manager (and every other employee in the department) now reports to me. The bad news is, when I brought your spring edition of the Key Reporter to the office to draft this letter and left it on my desk, our company’s chairman dropped by to chat. Seeing the newsletter, he said, “You can’t possibly be Phi Beta Kappa. You aren’t very smart.”

I am currently envisioning a number of new uses to make of the key. I only wish it was larger and had sharper edges!

[Anonymity requested]

Phi Beta Kappa Establishes Web Site

The initial pages for Phi Beta Kappa’s site on the World Wide Web are now available at http://www.pbk.org, and visitors may send e-mail to the Society from the site. The Society is now building the links between this site and other, existing sites at the chapters and associations nationwide.

In the future, chapter and association reporting forms and order forms will be available at the site, as will material from Phi Beta Kappa’s two publications, the American Scholar and the Key Reporter. The Society expects to have the site fully developed over the next year.

Phi Beta Kappa Receives $50,000 Bequest from Tulane Alumnus

The Society has received an unrestricted $50,000 bequest from Clyde J. Surgi, of San José, Costa Rica, who died last spring. Surgi, a chemist and businessman, was a 1933 ΦBK graduate of Tulane University.

‘Purchased Honor’ vs. Free Keys

I am happy to see that Mr. Chenoweth and Ms. Gould agree with me that membership in Phi Beta Kappa should not be a “purchased honor” [Key Reporter, Summer 1997], and hope that many others both agree and will say so. However, I did not go so far as to suggest that the key should also be provided, nor do I believe that it should. I seems to me that purchase of a key should be an individual decision, and the responsibility of the member.

Edward K. Markell, Berkeley, Calif.

A Key Ring?

The key no longer winds the gold pocket watch, the pocket watch has been supplanted by the battery-driven wrist watch, and modern attire for men does not require a vest as a shield for the gold chain as an attachment for the key. Few women wear the key as a necklace. Given the proliferation of rings signaling membership in a group, institution, or class of persons, why not consider developing a miniaturized replica of the key in the form of a ring?

Edward C. McDonough, Amherst, Mass.
Thomas McNaugher


These books consider the role of culture in shaping state behavior. Each deals with a state that demands deeper understanding in its own right, given East Asia’s rising importance to global trade and security. But each also seeks to amend our approach to international relations generally, by adding historical and domestic political dimensions to theories that often treat states as impermeable “billiard balls.” The result in both cases is prodigious scholarship that demands—but also, happily, rewards—careful reading.

In some sense Katzenstein has the easier case to make, because Japan clearly refuses to behave the way prevailing theories lead us to expect. In particular, Japan continues to deny the Realist prediction that, with the end of the cold war, it should move quickly into the ranks of “normal” (perhaps nuclear) big powers. Cultural norms prevent such moves, Katzenstein argues, by shaping the behavior and perceptions of Japanese politicians and policymakers. Liberal theory exposes some of these normative constraints on Japanese behavior, but pays scant attention to cultural norms that, in Katzenstein’s view, powerfully shape Japan’s commitment to nonviolence in the domestic as well as external security realms.

Given Japan’s violent military policy before 1946, the norms Katzenstein has in mind cannot be so deeply rooted and fixed as the term culture usually connotes. They are instead the product of more recent political struggles—in this case, Japan’s wartime experience and the contentious security debates of the 1950s. Readers may question how and under what circumstances the norms Katzenstein identifies might change again, and whether in fact the norms would survive a rapid and unexpected breach in Japan’s relations with the United States, as Katzenstein believes. Nonetheless, Katzenstein has identified and explained in considerable detail the level at which we have to understand Japan, and presumably other countries, if we are to understand their approach to security.

Johnston uses the phrase strategic culture in the more familiar sense, as “persistent historical patterns in the way particular states . . . think about the use of force for political ends.” In the case of China, he searches for persistent patterns of thought in the “Seven Military Classics,” written between the 5th century B.C. and the 10th century A.D. Alas, those he finds scarcely differ from principles offered by contemporary realpolitik thinkers concerning the need for military preparedness and the occasional usefulness of violence in settling disputes. As a result it is difficult to isolate the effects of culture from more contingent pressures. But this book goes some way toward correcting the widespread impression that the Chinese prefer a non- or minimally violent, accommodationist approach to their neighbors. Meanwhile, the first chapter is a terrific introduction to the literature on strategic culture.


Six years after the end of the cold war, the United States remains engaged globally, maintaining security relationships many people thought would unravel soon after the Soviet threat disappeared. Indeed, the president’s favorite foreign policy initiative involves actually expanding U.S. overseas engagement by extending membership in NATO to the “Visegrad” states—Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Although these books offer strong support for continued U.S. involvement overseas, both come down somewhat to the left of the Clinton administration in arguing for a more tempered approach to existing alliance commitments in Europe and northeast Asia.

Mandelbaum’s is surely the definitive critique of NATO expansion. In elegantly simple, clear prose Mandelbaum argues that NATO in its present form continues to do for Europe what it has done for the past 45 years: keep the United States in, the Russians out, and the Germans down, to borrow Lord Ismay’s famous rationale. Eliminating NATO makes no sense, but expanding it eastward is unnecessary—none of the Visegrad states is threatened militarily—and potentially dangerous, because it may derail Russia’s halting transition to democracy and erode its commitment to the arms control agreements forged in the late 1980s. Those agreements form a vital part of the “common security system” that has descended on Europe over the past decade, a system that, in Mandelbaum’s view, leaves Europeans unthreatening and unthreatened for the first time in this century. American withdrawal would destroy this system, as could a Russian change of heart. But Mandelbaum feels that it would be better to respond to any change in Russia than to risk provoking such a change by expanding NATO. Many readers will disagree with Mandelbaum’s arguments, but his book sets a high standard for what could be this winter’s major foreign policy debate.

Mochizuki and his Japanese and American colleagues focus on the Clinton administration’s commitment to maintain roughly 100,000 U.S. servicemen and women along the Pacific Rim, while working with the Japanese to gently expand the guidelines for U.S.-Japanese military cooperation. Mochizuki argues that the Japanese need and are ready for a wider defense debate than administrations in either the United States or Japan seem to want. Working only the margins of change, in his view, will leave Japan unprepared for the next big security crisis and the U.S.-Japan security relationship at risk to frustration on both sides. But widening Japan’s participation in that relationship will allow the United States to streamline its Pacific force posture, starting with the U.S. Marine Expeditionary Force now stationed on Okinawa.

Arguing that the political costs of this deployment outweigh the military value of keeping it there, military analyst Michael O’Hanlon outlines a plan for reducing that presence while leaving much of the unit’s equipment in place and per-
haps becting up other U.S. forces in the region. Although NATO will probably get more attention than Japan this winter, Japan’s relationship with the United States remains crucial to security in the Pacific, and this book is essential reading for those interested in that relationship and its future.


A terse, well-documented survey that essentially lets the Russians speak for themselves with regard to their military’s present readiness, involvement in politics, and views on national security strategy. Although the picture that emerges is in some ways unsurprising—Russia’s military and its industrial base are both in serious disrepair—details of the military’s so far unsuccessful forays into Russian politics are disturbing, as is clear evidence that the military strongly prefers a return to the old Soviet borders. Some readers will probably wish for more introductory and concluding material than Staar provides, but Staar seems less interested in making an argument than in providing data on a military, and a country, in the throes of transition. On that score he succeeds very well.

Louis Harlan


Alexis de Tocqueville’s Democracy in America (1835 but still in print in numerous editions) is widely acknowledged to be the best foreign commentary on American society in any period, and indeed because of its perspective, to be more penetrating and universal than any domestic account. The 29-year-old nobleman and his friend Gustave de Beaumont spent nine months here, traveling, experiencing, and observing. Ostensibly they were on a government mission to study American prisons of the Jacksonian era, but both broadened their mandate. They traveled the land from East Coast cities to the Old South and the new West at the edge of settlement. Beaumont wrote a novel about American slavery, while Tocqueville sought to capture the essence of the American character as influenced by democratic ideals. Tocqueville’s brilliant, nuanced interpretation dwelt on many inner contradictions, such as egalitarian slaveowners, a craving for solitude among a nation of joiners, and ambiguous male views of women’s rights and proper sphere.

Two generations ago the Yale historian George Wilson Pierson imaginatively used letters, diaries, and newspaper accounts to give us the American experiences and observations that underlay the subtle and ironic views of Tocqueville that have stood the test of time. Both Tocqueville and Pierson are strongly recommended to the curious reader.


Those who were disappointed by the lack of perspective and outright historical fictions of the recent television docudrama on George Wallace should read this book. It not only places Wallace clearly in his time but shows how Wallace began changing the mindset of southern politics toward the present Republican domination of the region and its conservative tenor. Wallace began his career as a moderately progressive spokesman of the “little people” of his legislative district, but he quickly rose to the height of racial demagoguery and became the governor who figuratively “stood in the schoolhouse door,” and whose intransigence on black voting rights became the focus of the Selma march and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In 1968 and 1972, in the wake of race riots, white backlash, and a growing but inchoate antigovernment sentiment among the electorate, Wallace ran for president and goaded President Nixon into a southern strategy that evolved into the Radical Right and Republican capture of the South by the Republican Party. After Wallace was shot in the spine in 1972 by a disturbed young man in Laurel, Maryland, the rest of his life has been denouement.


The cautionary tale of a self-made man, this is also an exploration of our developing national character. The story of William Cooper is so deeply rooted in narrative evidence that the reader has a sense of being close to the pulsing life of the time. Cooper rose from humble origins as a New Jersey Quaker to become the leading land speculator and landlord of upstate New York land seized first from the Indians and then from the British. He founded Cooperstown and dominated the surrounding region both economically and politically—as the presiding judge of Otsego County and U.S. congressman of the district. The American Revolution as much as his own vision and power of persuasion made him into an economic force in the new order, but he mistakenly sought to make himself over as a Federalist and a gentleman on the colonial model, which only made him a laughingstock among the truly genteel and an object of suspicion to common folk.

When Gov. George Clinton’s Republicans swept into power in the late 1790s, Cooper resigned his judgeship and retired from Congress. He was still rich, but many of his land claims rested on shaky titles, and at his death in 1809 his sons, reared as gentlemen, lacked his business skills. His youngest son, James Fenimore Cooper, became a novelist as his inheritance dissipated, and sought to reclaim his father’s lost status in a fictional town drawn upon Cooperstown. Taylor’s book deserves its Pulitzer Prize for what it can tell us about our national beginnings.

Svetlana Alpers


This is an exceptionally well-conceived and elegantly presented handbook, but the title hardly does justice to the breadth and depth of its coverage of Dutch art. The writers are an international group of younger scholars and critics from a number of disciplines. Their general subject is Dutch art of every kind, from coins and postage stamps to paintings and buildings, from the 15th century to the present. There are the expected entries on major masters and discoveries to be made among the minor ones. Many other artists, grouped in categories, are accessible by name in the exemplary index.

Art is considered here in the broadest cultural context. Topics range from such obvious ones as costume or state and municipal art collecting, to theater and theatricality, nationalism, war and warfare, and Dutch influences on North American art. There is something about the compact size of the Netherlands and the centrality of images in the culture that lends itself to this kind of presentation. An entire pictorial world has been taken apart and arranged for close examination.

The many well-reproduced black-and-white illustrations provoke one’s curiosity and lead one to search out the references to them in the text. There is a useful bibliographical listing at the end of each entry. This is the kind of book that anyone
can turn to for answers to those questions so often provoked by seeing things in a museum. If you are intrigued at all by Dutch art, this book is simply interesting to dip into.


Some of the best values in illustrated art books are catalogs of shows one never got to see. The money in publishing them comes from the promise of returns generated by visitors to the exhibit. They are reader- and viewer-friendly, though without providing the definitive assemblage of facts that once set catalogs apart from other publications.

Just as atlases in the 16th century provided travel for people at home, so a book like this one provides art. It invites you to sit in an armchair; read an essay by the distinguished English critic, art historian, and painter John Golding, among others; and above all look long and hard at about 50 paintings.

**Braque: The Late Works** is a beautiful publication on the occasion of an exhibition at the Royal Academy in London and Fort Worth this year. It is an end-of-the-century attempt to question the Braque-Picasso balance: Was there life for Braque after their great collaborative invention of Cubism? All the paintings here were made between 1941 and 1963, the year of the artist’s death. They take up themes familiar from Dutch 17th-century painting, but with a difference. The Studio cycle expands the table-tops of Dutch still-lives into rooms, and the Billiard Table cycle expands the table into astonishing shapes. Cubism is here as layerings of collage represented in paint. The effect is lyrical and painterly in a way that Picasso, who was a draftsman/sculptor at heart, never could be. But then, on the evidence of these works, for Braque the studio was a place of retirement from human turmoil, as it was not for Picasso.


This well-illustrated book served as a catalog for a large exhibition of the works of Albright (1897–1983) at the Art Institute in Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum in New York. It introduces us to the life and works of this “magic realist” from Chicago whose growing reputation in the years after World War II was overwhelmed by the style and the international success of Abstract Expressionism. Fascinating to read about and to look at, it is an American story through and through.

Ivan Le Lorraine Albright (named after the French painter Claude Lorrain) was born to a well-to-do painter father with artistic ambitions for his sons. Ivan lived and worked with his identical twin, Malvin, until they were 47, when Ivan married a newspaper heiress. With his brother, Ivan went to Hollywood in 1943 to paint a portrait of Dorian Gray for what has become the cult movie of that name. Albright worked extraordinarily slowly from models or from objects he methodically arranged in his studio. His financial independence enabled him to take years over a single painting and then to price it so high that it would never sell. His works can be seen today in the Art Institute of Chicago only because, after a long association, the museum accepted Albright’s gift of most of his works and papers.

Albright’s eccentric paintings are disturbing. They delve into every accident of matter, in particular, human flesh. There is a distant echo of northern European painting from Grünewald to Rembrandt in this. An extraordinary series of self-portraits concludes with a hospital drawing Albright made of his own face after he suffered a mortal stroke. The fascination with the body so common in all the arts today can go no further than this.

**Sculpture. Philip Rawson. Univ. of Pennsylvania Press. 1997. $29.95.**

Art lovers these days would do well to learn to look at sculpture. Sculpture in Europe has not had a continuous history in the sense that painting has, and it does not accommodate easily to the museum. The old art history survey courses began with sculpture, but then relegated it to a minor role as painting took over the story. In our century, and particularly right now in the United States, however, sculpture and other kinds of objects are proliferating in public spaces as well as in the museum.

The late Philip Rawson was an art teacher in England who wrote fascinating and definitive texts on ceramics, on drawing, and, finally, on sculpture. Although the book is not chronologically arranged, the coverage is worldwide and from all ages. His strategy is to analyze all the aspects of the medium that he is considering, from material to handling, form, color, spatial environment, visual presence, and meaning. Although Rawson’s analyses are cool in tone, he is passionately devoted to art and its making. He gives us categories within which to look and terms with which to think about what we see.

It is striking how many of the points Rawson makes about sculpture depend on non-European examples. Although the author does not directly acknowledge it, one of the interesting lessons of the book is the constraint of European sculpture when compared with the sculpture of other traditions such as those of Africa or India. Indeed, the flourishing of European and American sculptors in the 20th century—from Brancusi and Giacometti to Moore and David Smith—is unimaginable without knowledge of non-Western art.

The intelligence and eloquence of this book are unfortunately not matched by the illustrations. There are simply too few to enable a reader to try out the many terms and analyses that are proposed. It will puzzle us, though, to go out to find some sculpture to look at.

**Ronald Geballe**


The Yerkes Observatory, a century old this year, is the site of the largest refracting telescope ever built. Following a precedent still alive, it perpetuates the name of a wealthy businessman who lent his fortune to the advancement of a science with immense popular appeal. Yerkes had been approached by the young president of the still new University of Chicago, William R. Harper, and the younger man, George Ellery Hale, whom he had selected to become possibly the first in America to hold a position in a field called astrophysics, the study of the physical nature of the objects in the heavens. Osterbrock relates the growth of the observatory, under Hale, as the first in the country devoted to this subject, its decline, and its resurgence under another distinguished astrophysicist, Otto Struve. A distinguished array of faculty, students, and researchers have been attracted to the Yerkes. The story told here, while in many respects typical of the experience of many major research insti-
RECOMMENDED READING
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13


The structure of this book is, deliberately, weblike. As Burke points out but does not advocate, there are at least 447 ways to read it. Each of its 20 chapters is a rambling journey that starts with a seemingly isolated, simple event and traces its effect through a sequence of occurrences through time, many of which have been serendipitous and often lead back to the initiating one. Unintended consequences weave the web. In margins the author provides connections to pages where strands of the web cross, with the result that one can begin reading anywhere. Personalities enliven the pages. Extensive delving that crossed history, science, economics, and technology from ancient times to today was needed to make the book possible. Scholars bound to a discipline might not relish Burke’s breezy approach, but one could wish that linkages like these were used regularly in teaching at all levels.


Once censured by a university department head for talking about butterflies, sparrows, and swans in a course on aeronautical engineering, Temenekes has since gained ample revenge. His intriguing treatment of flying objects, from gnats to 747’s, shows that all obey the same flight principles. The relationships among lift, drag, wing loading, and cruising speed for insects, paper airplanes, birds, kites, gliders, and jet planes are brought together on a single Great Flight Diagram that allows, for example, the wing size of a 747 to be compared with that of a hummingbird. The comparisons, of course, have to be quantitative, but Temenekes makes do with simple equations and calculations, anecdotes, and clear illustrations that include many drawings of flying birds and insects.


What is “light”? What is its nature? Feelings and thoughts about light, attempts at explanation of the phenomenon, and uses of the word must be as old as humankind itself. Do the images we experience result from something originating in the eye and striking the subject, or does something move in the reverse direction? After long debate and some centuries of observation and experiment we can describe light’s properties in precise mathematical terms, but this ability, even the quantification of colors, hardly touches the rich history and many-faceted meaning of the word. And what is “vision”? Park has written a “history of thought about light, rather than the study of a gradual climb toward truth in which [he has] tried to present ideas as they presented themselves.” As a result, he uses no mathematics, and the great advances of the 20th century take up little more than a single chapter. This is an unusual treatment of the subject, and one well worth reading by those with technical background no less than by those without.


Having married a woman who had no background in physics but great curiosity about it, Azároff set out to record some of their breakfast conversations (real or contrived?) in a style intended to be easy and interesting for the general reader. Informally, and in brief chapters, he discusses motion, gravity, energy, electricity, magnetism, light, waves, atoms, radioactivity, even quarks. The history is there as well as the physics. The book is a delight.


Two themes are explored in this book: the historical development of the materials used by people and the increasing importance of chemical and physical analysis and dating techniques for elucidating the nature of archaeological discoveries. As the author states, “These two themes describe chemistry both as creator and as analyst of culture.” Each chapter focuses on a different class of archaeological material: stone, soil, pottery, color, glass, organics, metals, human remains.

Many questions are raised: How did ancient Greeks produce both black and red on the surface of a ceramic? What kinds of foodstuffs left traces inside ancient pottery? What did it take to introduce bright colors to the palettes of ancient peoples? What were the precursors of glass, and when was true glass first made? Not all are answered yet. The book contains an enormous amount of detail. We learn that the Sumerians, 5,000 years ago, made a liquid soap, that there is evidence for at least five independent discoveries of smelting, and that the level of strontium in bone falls with position in the food chain but can increase or decrease during burial. There is more here than can readily be assimilated, yet the book offers the physical foundation for much of the reading on the development of culture.

Robert P. Sonkowsky

This book is a scholarly contribution to theory of Homeric poetry. It is clearly written (Greek is translated) and will be of great interest to students of oral poetry and poetics. I find it helpful also to an understanding of performance. Bakker’s analyses of rhythm and meter exploit and expand on the latest comparative linguistics research. They explicate units of thought in Homeric verse from the perspective of “natural” speech and relate them to metrical, syntactic, and rhetorical structure. Bakker also includes a comparison with prose, and his conclusions are refreshing. His style of exposition is respectful of lay readers.


This study of Greek lyric poetry from the 7th to the early 5th centuries B.C.E. will appeal especially to scholars and students interested in analyzing the images of women in ancient Greece and, by comparison, those of men as well. Stehle presents a bold new taxonomy and theory of Greek lyric and its performance. She describes the staging of choral/community, bardic, and symposiast poetry as patterns that guide gender presentation in performance. Her final chapter interprets the poet Sappho as escaping this “tyranny of performance” by exploiting the power of her written texts to present herself as connected to women everywhere in resisting “the impositions upon their emotions.”


This well-written and thorough work primarily concerns heroines, not, of course, the fragile kind who in modern romance novels are rescued by some man (ly hero), but perhaps more like the kind
Maya Angelou calls "sheros." It is a perceptive work, consisting of both perspiration and inspiration. For example, Lyons treats the vast scholarship behind the very definition of hero and heroine, as well as the whole range of primary sources on Greek heroines, providing a 63-page appendix that catalogs all Greek heroines and the earliest references to each. Her interpretations of key passages from authors such as Homer, Pindar, and Euripides, supplemented by the brilliant adusing of evidence from the likes of Pausanias, are most illuminating. Her treatments of the androgynous god Dionysus and of Iphigenia's substitution in ritual sacrifice shed new light, and enable us to see the heroine where she bridges not only mortality and immortality but also mortality and divinity. Lyons thereby gives us insights into the mutually defining relationships between gods and humans in the establishing of cults.


This is a comprehensive introduction to the evidence on Roman architects; their education, methods, social standing; the functions of their buildings; and their city planning. Anderson also discusses the supply of construction workers, as well as the building material, including wood, tufa, concrete, brick, marble. He does not treat the aesthetics of architecture. Less a work of original scholarship than a needed synthesis of world scholarship on those more practical matters and on the surrounding sociological topics, this book is intended for all who want to know the limited evidence on these topics. It will give them a sense of the realia and the quotidian infrastructure of the ancient Roman world.

Anna J. Schwartz


This study examines the role of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in Japan in promoting technical industrial policy since 1975. The author documents the unraveling of MITI's efforts in microelectronics and computers in the 1980s, largely because of its insistence on supporting technologies that were originally targeted as winners but were made obsolete by subsequent changes in market needs and technology. Some American economists have touted MITI's success in coordinating the actions of competing Japanese firms, but Callon shows that, in fact, conflict characterizes high-tech Japanese projects, because of competition not only between companies but also between MITI and other bureaucracies.


Basing his views on a rise of official homelessness in New York, Chicago, Newark, Toronto, London, and Hamburg, the author examines links among increased homelessness and income distribution, a smaller middle class, interest rates, operating costs, gentrification, government regulation, public housing, income maintenance systems, mental illness, deinstitutionalization, substance abuse, and criminal justice. He attributes increased homelessness in North America to increased inequality in income and a smaller supply of housing for the poor because, as the middle class has become smaller, the cost of housing devolved from the middle class to the poor has increased. The author's major policy recommendation is a housing allowance, similar to systems in use in Europe.


This book focuses first on the slow pace of change in the traditional social structure of the Quaker province in the 1780s, and then on processes of change in that society in the early stages of its transformation to capitalism and modernity. Change is exemplified by the establishment by Congress of the Bank of North America and its incorporation in Pennsylvania in 1781. This was America's first commercial bank to serve as a fiscal tool to aid the flagging American cause and as an entrepreneurial venture to support the economic interests of Pennsylvania's mercantile elite. The bank's opposition to the creation of a land bank led to an attempt to destroy it. The author traces tensions between capitalist and noncapitalist social relations, drawing on a public debate on the nature and significance of commercial banking.


The news media have reported the miserable condition of local government services in the District of Columbia that led Congress to transfer fiscal control of the city from the hands of the elected mayor to a presidentially appointed Control Board. The reasons that revenues have fallen short of budget balance in the nation's capital are the focus of the timely analysis in this book. They form the basis for the author's recommendations to shift spending responsibility for welfare, Medicaid, prisons, higher education, juvenile justice, and other state-type services from the District to the federal government.


The National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers that Congress established before the Confederates' surrender was the forerunner of today's Veterans Administration Hospital system. Kelly discusses the extension to Union veterans of social benefits including pensions, preference in government jobs, and care that the legislation provided through the creation of a federal network of soldiers' homes. Originally open only to the war disabled, the homes by the mid-1880s were admitting elderly veterans and those disabled in civilian life. The expansion of these social benefits prepared the way for later expansion of the U.S. welfare state in a theme of Kelly's study.


Anyone who wants to learn why the gold standard, a relic of the past, continues to fascinate economists will profit from this collection of essays. Of the 13 chapters in this volume, the first summarizes recent scholarship that explains the success of the pre-World War I gold standard in terms of a contingent rule with escape clauses, and of a credible commitment to a fixed-exchange-rate regime by the monetary authorities, with rapid adjustment to significant underlying disturbances. The final chapter casts doubt on the chances of success of a pegged-exchange-rate system, such as is envisaged by the ongoing European project of monetary union, in the absence of the political and economic conditions of the 19th-century world. Even if the intervening chapters, which make liberal use of economic theory and econometrics in elaborating the introductory summaries, are not wholly accessible to the general reader, the book is valuable for demonstrating the light this historical experience sheds on recent developments such as the debt crisis of the 1980s and currency crises of the 1990s.
Phi Betes Get the Credit They Deserve

Phi Beta Kappa is now accepting credit card purchases of its wall display and key jewelry. The popular wall display combines a membership certificate and a large gold-plated key, framed in walnut (12 by 16 inches) and double matted. Both the key and the certificate are engraved with the member’s name and chapter.

Keys and key pins also may be purchased by credit card. Each key/key pin is gift boxed. Pictured here is the medium-size key (the most popular). Other sizes, as well as neck chains, tie tacks, and tie chains, also are available.

To order, check the item you want on the form below and send it to the Treasurer, Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009. You may also place your order or request a complete price list by faxing (202) 986-1601 or by calling (202) 265-3808.

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- Medium-size key, 10-karat gold $79
- Medium-size key, 24-karat gold plate $28
- Medium-size key pin, 10-karat gold $83
- Medium-size key pin, 24-karat gold plate $29

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Monterey Institute Again Offers Scholarships to Phi Beta Kappa Members

For several years the Monterey Institute of International Studies has been offering half-tuition, two-year scholarships to Phi Beta Kappa members who are admitted to a degree program at the institute. Last year 13 ΦBK members received scholarships.

To obtain an application form for 1998-99, write to the Admissions Office, 425 Van Buren Street, Monterey, CA 93940; or telephone (408) 647-4123, fax (408) 647-6405, or e-mail admit@miis.edu.

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