

How About the Humanities?

I begin with J. L. Austin and a brief inquiry into speech-act theory. Now, before half of you get up and walk out (and before Dominick LaCapra can finish formulating his very penetrating question on this topic), let me say simply that the meaning of my title depends a great deal on how I perform it and in so doing do something to the humanities by situating them in one or another hierarchy. If I say, “How about the humanities?” rather in the way I might say “How about the Cornell basketball team?” I express a positive amazement at their awesome and mighty power. But if I say, “How about the humanities?” it sounds a bit as if I have just gone down a list from which the humanities have been left out. That could even prompt the response “How about the humanities?” as if to say the humanities do not deserve to be on this list. This can lead to another performance, which goes [whining] “How about the humanities?”

We should all now hold hands and repeat as many times as it takes, “I will not whine about the humanities!” I might also suggest that we declare a moratorium on the use of the phrase “the crisis in the humanities.” There are too many other real crises to go around. Take, for example, the nation’s political life.

But what about the humanities? The question is about the proper place of the humanities (and, I would add, the arts) in the life of a university as it might hope to exemplify their proper place in society at large. This raises more questions. On what criteria will we determine the value of the humanities? What is the goal of the humanities? What are the humanities anyway?

In the current economic turmoil more or less everything is likely to be valued in terms of money. This, however, is not a new phenomenon. The nation has a long tradition of valuing and investing primarily in those aspects of its intellectual life that contribute to the gross domestic

product or the national defense or preferably both. The nation has also been willing to spend money on curing disease, mostly so as to put off death as long as possible, as for example, by doubling the budget of the NIH, but not necessarily on making those cures available to all citizens and certainly without thinking about why one might want to live longer in the first place. The current economic stress simply brings to the fore ever more forcefully the wish to justify everything in instrumental terms. In the world of higher education, where budgets must be cut, the temptation is to value those activities that are thought to enhance revenue, or at least minimize loss. Students and their parents are also likely to be making the argument for higher education in instrumental terms and thus choosing among institutions and fields of study according to the likelihood of any one of them leading to a job with a good salary and long-term prospects. It is as Archie Ammons put it in a poem that begins, “I can tell you what I need is money.” Not piddling amounts, he says, but “shoals of seminal coin.”

Students and parents in pursuit of a job, no matter what job, should be reminded of the worlds of another great writer, George Eliot. In Silas Marner she writes, “Every man’s work, pursued steadily, tends in this way to become an end in itself, and so to bridge over the loveless chasms of his life.” Of Silas’s life and the lesson that might be drawn from it she writes:

His life had reduced itself to the functions of weaving and hoarding, without any contemplation of an end towards which the functions tended. The same sort of process has perhaps been undergone by wiser men, when they have been cut off from faith and love—only, instead of a loom and a heap of guineas, they have had some erudite research, some ingenious project, or some well-knit theory.

Even university professors might reread these lines once in a while.

It is not surprising, then, that the remedy to the current state of affairs of the humanities has lately seemed to take an instrumental turn. To be sure, one still hears echoes of the traditional view that the humanities are ends in themselves. But Stan Katz, for example, remarks, “The more important point is that the humanities community has not developed a plausible case for enhanced public support. If we are to make our case to the nation, the community has to articulate its goals and capacities much more clearly than it has done thus far.” Andrew Delbanco refers to the traditional view but goes on to say, “There is a certain prideful purity in such a view, but if educators hope for renewed public trust in the value of liberal as opposed to practical or vocational education, we have to come to terms with the utility question one way or another.” The topic even made it onto the front page of the arts section of The New York Times, where an article largely stimulated by Delbanco’s piece was headlined, “In Tough Times, the Humanities Must Justify Their Worth.”

There are, of course, very powerful instrumental arguments for investing in the humanities and the arts. The arts have been somewhat better at advancing these than the humanities, and this has even occasioned unfortunate expressions of envy, as when the National Endowment for the Arts received additional funding from the federal stimulus effort and the National Endowment for the Humanities did not. This was to be sure yet another sign in the system, but we should not be distracted by the allocation of such pathetic sums. We should all be happy if the budgets of both endowments were to be doubled. But since the budget of each is only about \$150 million, a major part of which must be spread across 435 congressional districts, a doubling would still not make much of a dent in what troubles us about the nation’s

intellectual life. For comparative purposes, I might point out that such a doubling would enable each of the endowments to buy two F-22 fighter jets instead of just one.

Both the humanities and the arts must certainly make the case in the practical terms that the public seems to understand, but not only those terms. When it comes to the economic ripple effects of both the humanities and the arts, both are as shovel-ready as any sector of the economy could be. Many studies have shown that lively arts communities can be powerful economic engines and justify public investment. People who go to plays and concerts eat in restaurants and will sometimes buy airplane tickets and stay in hotels for the purpose. And, of course, there are jobs for actors, musicians, stage hands, ticket sellers and takers, and a great many others. Less often advanced is the comparable case for the humanities. There are certainly plenty of unemployed and under-employed PhDs in the humanities, all of whom could be put to work in the very labor intensive kind of work that members of humanities faculties do with their students. Imagine establishing something of the quality of Cornell's Knight Writing Program in some fraction of the 4,000 or so institutions of higher education in the country. The economic impact would be every bit as powerful as creating the jobs that build highways and bridges, and the contribution to repairing the nation's crumbling intellectual infrastructure would be notable. Imagine, if after a certain time, a significant fraction of the U. S. Congress had been through a program like that, in which writing is taught as a tool of thinking and not just as a matter of ensuring agreement in number between subject and verb. Imagine that! O.K. Leave out the part about the U. S. Congress. This is still a pretty good argument in terms of job creation and contribution to GDP resulting from investment in the humanities.

There are even arguments for the humanities in terms of the national defense and global competitiveness. Suppose the nation invested significantly over the long term in knowing the

languages and history and religion and culture of other peoples instead of waiting until we decide to start a war somewhere and find ourselves embarrassed at not having enough people of our own capable of reading the local newspapers? It might even be better to know and appreciate the cultures of people we would hope to have as our allies if it came to that. But we might even know enough to think better of going to war in the first place. And then we might be a lot better at selling all of the stuff we like to sell around the world, with all of the consequences for job creation at home. (Now someone will say, “But what about all of those F-22s that we want to sell, especially since our own Department of Defense doesn’t want to buy them, despite the insistence of the many members of Congress in whose district some piece of that airplane is made?” I didn’t say this was easy. But let’s say that for every F-22 that we agree not to make and sell, we will give them 3,000 humanities postdocs—grocery buying, car-buying, tax-paying humanities postdocs—to teach writing and thinking to their constituents. Some will fear that this might not lead to their re-election. We will need to work out further incentives in order to get this passed, especially for the State of Nebraska. But we will have plenty of time before such a reality strikes.)

One should not fear a certain amount of the talk about money, and one should not shrink from making the instrumental argument as forcefully as others will make it for their own purposes. The problem, however, is that squabbling over money drives a wedge where we ought not to want a wedge to be driven, especially in a university. This wedge is likely to present itself first in terms of the so-called two cultures.

It has been fifty years since C. P. Snow delivered the Rede lecture at Cambridge with the title “The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution.” Its published title, The Two Cultures, has entered the language as shorthand for something about the difference between the sciences and

the humanities, and the phrase is often used by people who have long since forgotten exactly what he had to say or perhaps never knew. [The quotations below are from the edition of 1998 published by the Cambridge University Press, including a valuable introduction by Stefan Collini and Snow's own "The Two Cultures: A Second Look" of 1963.] The idea of such a difference continues to have a powerful hold on our thinking, and much that is said about the sciences and the humanities at present not only assumes some sort of difference but acts to reinforce it. This often takes the form of a kind of rivalry, sometimes set about with jealousies small and large, in which one culture or the other feels underappreciated in relation to the other or simply underappreciated altogether. Most often, both feel undervalued, even if for somewhat different reasons.

If we take for granted the existence of two separate cultures, then the best that we are likely to be able to hope for is a kind of "two-state" solution, with the two cultures living peacefully next to one another, each culture secure within its own borders and engaging perhaps in some amount of trade. We should try instead, however, to loosen the grip of this construct on our thinking. I do not mean only to suggest that the terrain of the social sciences should be taken as a third culture, as Snow himself came to think possible or as Jerome Kagan does in a recent book. [The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Humanities in the 21st Century: Revisiting C. P. Snow, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.] Indeed, the colloquial distinction between the "hard" and the "soft" social sciences provides further evidence of the power of the notion of two cultures. In order to begin to deconstruct this binary opposition it will help to recall some of the terms in which Snow put his argument.

His principal concern was the disparity between the world's rich and its poor. Indeed he had originally thought of calling the lecture "The Rich and the Poor" and later wished that he had

not changed his mind. This was not a matter of idle speculation. He was certain that the poor had observed the gulf that separated them from the rich and that they would not long tolerate that gulf before resorting to violence. Of the disparity between rich and poor he asserted that, “Whatever else in the world we know survives to the year 2000, that won’t.” Further, he wrote:

Since the gap between the rich countries and the poor can be removed, it will be. If we are shortsighted, inept, incapable either of good-will or enlightened self-interest, then it may be removed to the accompaniment of war and starvation: but removed it will be. The questions are, how, and by whom.

The solution to this problem would require first a vast outlay of capital by the industrialized world.

The second requirement, after capital, as important as capital, is men. That is, trained scientists and engineers adaptable enough to devote themselves to a foreign country’s industrialization for at least ten years out of their lives. . . .

These men, whom we don’t yet possess, need to be trained not only in scientific but in human terms. They could not do their job if they did not shrug off every trace of paternalism [which characterized the work of “plenty of Europeans, from St. Francis Xavier to Schweitzer”]. . . . [Asians and Africans] want men who will muck in as colleagues, who will pass on what they know, do an honest technical job, and get out. Fortunately, this is an attitude which comes easily to scientists. They are freer than most people from racial feeling; their own culture is in its human relations a democratic one. In

their own internal climate, the breeze of the equality of man hits you in the face, sometimes rather roughly, just as it does in Norway.

After expressing his doubts about how such a massive undertaking might be brought about, he begins his penultimate paragraph as follows:

Meanwhile, there are steps to be taken which aren't outside the powers of reflective people. Education isn't the total solution to this problem: but without education the West can't even begin to cope. All the arrows point the same way. Closing the gap between our cultures is a necessity in the most abstract intellectual sense, as well as in the most practical. When those two senses have grown apart, then no society is going to be able to think with wisdom. For the sake of the intellectual life, for the sake of this country's special danger, for the sake of the western society living precariously rich among the poor, for the sake of the poor who needn't be poor if there is intelligence in the world, it is obligatory for us and the Americans and the whole West to look at our education with fresh eyes.

A few years later, he characterized the relation between the two cultures as follows.

“Between these two groups—the scientists and the literary intellectuals—there is little communication and, instead of fellow-feeling, something like hostility.”

To put the matter starkly, his was not only an assertion of the importance of the “scientific revolution” as the solution to all of the world's problems, especially the problem of the disparity between the rich and poor, it was an attack on “literary intellectuals” for standing in

the way of what scientists and applied scientists could accomplish. That the two cultures did not communicate with one another was a terribly serious problem, but this was principally because the literary culture and its “Luddites” (as exemplified in Britain’s civil service) stood in the way of the ability of the scientific one to cure the world’s ills. In later comments he asserted that “scientists in a divided culture provide a knowledge of some potentialities which is theirs alone.”

One must admire the passion with which he viewed the need to improve very substantially the condition of the world’s poor, who still greatly outnumber the well to do of Western developed countries. But of course the disparity between rich and poor has now lasted well beyond the year 2000. And it would be hard to assert today that this is because scientists and engineers have been held back from the effort by humanists.

The polemic that erupted was hardly surprising except perhaps in its vitriol on the side of the “literary intellectuals.” Nevertheless, Snow had made clear who the enemy was. Among many other things, to say that scientists are freer from “racial feeling” than humanists can hardly have been much less outrageous then than it would be today. Hence, the enemy responded with all of the literary gifts at its disposal. His own rejoinder to this response was at moments even more pointed. After a critique of modernist literature he writes, “The question is this: how far is it possible to share the hopes of the scientific revolution, the modest difficult hopes for other human lives, and at the same time participate without qualification in the kind of literature which has just been defined?” He professed genuinely not to know the answer.

How might we describe the relations between the two cultures fifty years after the Rede Lecture? Jerome Kagan writes, “C. P. Snow would not have to alter the essential claims in his 1959 essay and would not have been surprised by the even broader gulf that exists between natural scientists and humanists. However, he might not have anticipated the strident rejection of

evolutionary theory by advocates of creation ideology and a public less willing to regard the rationally based conclusions of natural scientists as the soundest bases for all decisions.” (p. 245)

I doubt that the gulf is really broader. But however broad, I believe it to be different in character from the one that Snow describes, setting aside at least for the moment whether his description was entirely accurate even then. For a start, surely no one could reasonably claim that “literary intellectuals” could be responsible for holding back the progress of science in solving the world’s problems, at least not from the perspective of the United States. Whatever many scientists may believe about such people, it is clear that in this country there have not been enough of them or their students holding public office to do any harm or any good either.

Scientists have mostly been too busy and too well funded to worry much about humanists, except perhaps to make fun of one or another fad typically affecting only a small part of the humanities. For their part, humanists have mostly learned to live with the fact that scientists are very busy pursuing their own work and the very substantial resources that are required to support it. Some humanists will fear that the disparity in resources and the institutional energy devoted to pursuing them distorts some of the basic values of universities and can even lead to a kind of corruption of universities by commercial or governmental interests. But except perhaps in times of university budget cuts, when there is competition for resources among all constituencies in the university, most humanists will be reasonably content knowing that there is not very much they can do about the matter.

Two questions then remain. (1) If not the humanists, what is it that has prevented the “scientific revolution” from curing the world’s problems? (2) What is science capable of accomplishing in the world, and why should we want to study it in any case?

The answer to the first question lies in Kagan's remark about what might indeed surprise C. P. Snow about "the rejection of evolutionary theory by advocates of creation ideology and a public less willing to regard the rationally based conclusions of natural scientists as the soundest bases for all decisions." I hope that not even all scientists regard science as the soundest basis for all decisions. But apart from that, the people being referred to here are certainly not the humanists properly so called. Indeed, most scientists and humanists properly so called would be on precisely the same side with respect to this question. Here there are no doubt two cultures arrayed against one another, but they are not the sciences versus the humanities. They are something more like thoughtful people versus anti-intellectuals.

This suggests the answer to the second question. What has held back the application of science to the solution of many of the world's problems and has indeed used science to create a good many of those problems is the very large population of outright anti-intellectuals and then, too, the not insignificant group of people whom we might be willing to call either scientists or humanists but who are not able to think carefully enough about what science might be good for, about the responsibilities it entails, and about the most important reasons for studying it.

The real anti-scientists in our midst are every bit as much anti-humanists by any reasonable definition. In this sense, the real enemy in the struggle to improve the quality (both physical and intellectual) of the lives of the world's peoples is an enemy that scientists and humanists have in common. But the problem is still more complicated, for even if we could sweep away that common enemy we would not be likely to solve the world's problems. That is because the community of scientists and humanists itself includes people who are not sufficiently thoughtful. Some of them are even evil.

Unfortunately, science can be put to both good and evil purposes, as we all know. It can also produce terrible effects when it is used by even well-meaning scientists and engineers without a sufficient concern for possible longer-term consequences. For example, the destruction of the environment is made possible by science and engineering as deployed by scientists and engineers. Now, before any humanist rises to say that this would all be avoided if scientists and engineers studied more humanities, it must be pointed out that this is not true either. Some people with deep knowledge of the humanities and indeed some of the world's greatest artists and writers have been despicable people. Alas, training more scientists and engineers and training more humanists and obliging them all to study with one another will not by itself deliver the results that Snow imagined. Realizing that the problem is more complicated than it has sometimes been said to be, however, might just be the beginning of working toward at least partial solutions. In the present context, this entails realizing that both the sciences and the humanities as formal courses of study have often been oversold as cures for our ills.

The instrumental arguments for teaching science follow from the instrumental arguments for science itself, and the latter are closely related to Snow's arguments. Science solves the world's problems. It raises the standard of living by creating economic prosperity and curing disease. In national contexts, its darker virtue, which is almost as often cited as any other, is its contribution to national defense, or all too often, its contribution to the ability to make war. In the American context, given the national practical turn of mind, these are the arguments most likely to work. And it must be said that some of the scientific community has often been willing to make somewhat cynical use of the national defense argument in the attempt to justify the allocation of resources to science that ought to be justified in other terms that have less appeal to the general public and its elected representatives. In this context we should recall the words of a

very great Cornellian, the physicist Robert Wilson, the founding director of the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory and for whom Cornell's own laboratory is named. When asked in congressional testimony whether Fermilab would contribute to the national defense, he replied "It will not contribute to the national defense, except to make the nation worth defending."

This could set us on a path away from assuming the existence of two cultures to an understanding of what scientists and humanists have deeply in common and why it is essential that they work very closely together. When thoughtful scientists and humanists are troubled about the place of their own disciplines in national life, they actually share a single disturbing view. Archie Ammons captures this in characteristic fashion:

Ideas pass through

Most heads

Without taking on

Any substance or

Leaving any trace.

Let us stipulate that there are both know-nothing humanists and know-nothing scientists who assume that theirs is the only way of knowing anything worth knowing. It will be essential to overcome such views on both sides. Science enables us to understand only certain aspects of the world we live in, namely the natural world, and there is much that we will not soon understand even about that. Indeed, the way in which science proceeds is by demonstrating that

some previously agreed upon understanding was simply wrong. This at a minimum calls for a certain modesty with respect to acting on what science claims to understand at any given moment. Furthermore, the scientific method embodies only one—though very powerful—method of knowing, and many of the things that we might like to know and that might aid us in going about the world are simply not amenable to the scientific method. John Maynard Keynes, in his General Theory, gives a nice illustration: “the statement that Queen Victoria was a better queen but not a happier woman than Queen Elizabeth [is] a proposition not without meaning and not without interest, but unsuitable as material for the differential calculus.”

Because I am a humanist, some may suppose that I am now about to launch into an assertion of the importance of the humanities in a liberal arts curriculum that should be imposed on scientists. Such an assertion, of which there have been many, would be likely to rely, however, on a justification of the humanities that is as incomplete as the typical instrumental arguments so often advanced to promote the sciences. It would merely throw us back into the clutches of the uneasy peace with occasional border skirmishes between the alleged two cultures. In order to avoid this, it is necessary to consider some aspects of the humanities and their place in society.

Humanists long believed that the study of the humanities required essentially no justification. The importance of the humanities was self-evident in this view, and school curricula embodied it. To study the humanities was to acquire culture, and in Matthew Arnold’s words, “Culture is to know the best that has been said and thought in the world.” In the English-speaking world, the definition of “the best” remained rather narrow for quite a long time. A number of things conspired to undermine this view, however.

In the United States it was perhaps always somewhat at odds with a practical spirit oriented toward discovery and creation of the new. Then, in the latter part of the twentieth century, a great diversity of cultural voices demanded admission to “the best,” which encouraged the view in some quarters that all was relative in the humanities. In the worst of cases, this alleged relativism meant that the humanities had lost their claim to the national attention at anything like the level of the sciences, which had experienced since at least the Second World War an enormous rise in prestige and in resources. All of this continued the line of C. P. Snow.

This engendered a kind of envy within the humanities as well as the arts with resulting calls for increased resources and, perhaps more than anything, signs of attention and respect. It was most apparent on university and college campuses, but to a limited degree it made itself felt in the public sphere as well. Universities created centers for the humanities, and government created a national endowment for the humanities and numerous state councils for the humanities. By comparison with the sciences, of course, the resources allocated to these activities were trivial.

In pursuing these objectives, humanists were increasingly drawn to advancing the kinds of arguments that seemed to work so well for the sciences. These were instrumental arguments. Although it was not so easy to demonstrate the contributions of the humanities to the gross domestic product or the national defense, these were the kinds of arguments that seemed to be required. Thus, even while wistfully recalling an earlier era in which it had been sufficient to advocate the humanities for the humanities’ sake and while objecting to society’s seeming insistence on justifying everything only in material terms, many in the humanities gave in to the need to justify their enterprise in precisely such terms.

The problem is that, as in the realm of the sciences, the instrumental argument is too often and too easily oversold. Even the more elevated arguments in terms of the civilizing and even ennobling effects of study in the humanities cannot be guaranteed. Many high-ranking Nazis were highly “cultured” and had a deep knowledge of the literature, philosophy, and art of the Western tradition. Closer to home, many American undergraduates fulfill their distribution requirements at distinguished institutions without seeming to have developed the intellectual equipment that the humanities claim in these terms to develop. Some of them even go on to hold the highest political offices in spite of that, as if to prove the point. Of course, many students do have thrilling experiences in their study of the humanities, as do many in the sciences, and they will have been sitting in classes alongside those that do not.

Thoughtful scientists and humanists are equally dismayed at the quality of the nation’s intellectual life, and for the same reasons. Because so much more money is at stake in terms of investment as well as economic outcome, science has pressed the matter harder. But what scientists and humanists both lament underneath it all is the scarcity in society of a certain quality of mind. It is not about how many people can recite the second law of thermodynamics or describe what happened in 1789. To be sure, scientists and humanists have different tools that are suitable for studying different kinds of things. But both are driven by curiosity and a passion to know and understand more. They cannot imagine being bored, and they do not know the difference between work and fun.

Truly thoughtful scientists and humanists may know different things and employ different methods in the effort to learn still more. But neither would (or should) claim that theirs are the only things worth knowing and theirs the only tools worth applying. Their common aim is to develop ways to think about whatever needs thinking about, taking care not to allow their

own tools to blind them to the utility of others. Above all they revel in the life of the mind, and this is what they seek to develop in others. This suggests that their most fundamental goals in educating students and the general public really are the same. And this in turn calls for a much deeper collaboration between them.

That collaboration, and indeed, the collaboration of everyone involved in the work of the university, cannot rest first and foremost on how to divide up the money and justify in purely financial terms that division. We often speak of businesses in terms of their value proposition. We sometimes speak of higher education in terms of its value proposition—the financial return over a lifetime of an investment in higher education. It is essential, however, that we also think about the values proposition of higher education and of the humanities and the arts more broadly. The character of a society--and of a university--will ultimately reflect its values more than its wealth. Values will determine how wealth is created and the uses to which it is put. The question that a society or a university must ask itself, therefore, especially in times of strained resources, is “What are our values? What do we in fact stand for?”

Bill Readings wrote a book some years ago titled The University in Ruins in which he observed that the university as it took shape in the 19th century and into the 20th was the product of the nation state and served the state’s purposes by forming its youth into proper citizens. With the decline of the nation state, he claimed, universities no longer served that function and thus came to stand for nothing of particular substance save the claim of “excellence,” which is for the most part vacuous. To say that what a university values most is excellence is, by itself, not to say very much. Such a statement participates too much in the culture of sports, which afflicts us all, as if it were possible to define reasonably what it means for a university to be in the top ten and

as if it means anything of consequence for very many colleges and universities to claim to be in the top ten or to aspire to get there.

A university should stand for something—should have values—that are not determined by purely financial considerations. I do not mean by this that it must have a high-sounding mission statement. For a start it should care about values and be engaged in a steady examination of its values, ensuring that its resources are deployed appropriately in support of them. Imagine the proverbial visiting Martian walking around the campus, reading the campus newspaper, looking at the university website, overhearing conversations among the whole range of members of the university community and asking “What do these creatures seem to care about?” Imagine the archeologist thousands of years hence excavating the place and asking the same kind of question.

By this I do not mean to suggest that every faculty member should teach and every student should take a course with the word “values” or “ethics” in the title. Such notions should be baked in to every last course in the university to some degree, no matter what its title. It is, nevertheless, the humanities and the arts that explore human values and confront each of us with the need to choose the values by which we will live. In a period in which the nation is quite properly concerned with the creation of jobs for the embarrassingly high number of unemployed, we must also concern ourselves with the values that will shape the lives of those who do have jobs, perhaps even extremely lucrative jobs, as well as those who do not. These values will determine how—indeed if—our democracy is to function.

Whether for rich or poor, a job is not something to be pursued simply for its own sake with no thought of what greater purpose life might embody. And an education that prepares only for a job without attention to greater purposes is not an education in the fullest sense. Great

works of art and literature explore these matters and present them powerfully as nothing else can, which is the deepest reason for making the humanities and the arts a part of every education and of every life thereafter. There must always be an abundance of signs in the system that we care about such things, even though exposure to such things is not guaranteed to work in the life of every individual. If some students and perhaps even some members of the faculty fail to engage deeply with the kinds of human problems that the humanities and the arts explore and fail to be inspired by the richness of human artistic creation, it should not be because the University does not make clear in its daily life—in the allocation of its time, energy, and money—that these are essential ingredients in any life worth living.

It might be countered to all of this that, although money does not in and of itself matter all that much, it is how one keeps score. And there will be the argument that some things simply cost more than others and necessarily consume a greater than average share of available resources. Both propositions should be greeted with some skepticism. The university's values must not be determined by what is said to "bring in" the most money and what is said to be inherently more costly. The sciences "bring in" large quantities of money to a university like Cornell, but all of that money costs the university even more money, an important part of it being paid for by the parents of undergraduates, whether the federal government or anyone else admits this or not. In the University of California system, which is under enormous stress, there have been official pronouncements that English and such fields are "the problem" because, unlike the sciences and the professional schools, there is no one to pay for them. Counterclaims have been advanced on the basis of studies showing that some fields in the humanities such as English actually bring in more revenue than they spend.

This puts the argument over resources in the wrong terms. Even if everyone could be persuaded that the English Department is a profit center, that should not be the reason for having one. The style of university administration that is grounded in such analyses, often called Responsibility Center Management, by its nature leaves values entirely out of account and precludes a role for anything that one might be willing to call educational principle.

Because I care deeply about Cornell University, I will allow myself to conclude by saying something about this specific case. Cornell had a version of Responsibility Center Management long before it became fashionable. This grew up as a way of managing the relationship between the State of New York and the private side of the University. I used to joke that if the dean of some college took a drink from the fountain outside the president's office on the third floor of Day Hall, his or her college was charged for it. At the present moment of some stress, however, a further move in the direction of Responsibility Center Management would be truly dangerous in strategic terms and even as a business decision. If we were to think of this simply as a question of business strategy, we would begin by asking what are Cornell's unique strengths and what distinguishes it from its competitors. Does it have a profile on the landscape of higher education that it should want to maintain and strengthen rather than become more or less indistinguishable from its competitors? I believe that it does.

I have explained to myself and anyone else who cares to listen why it is that I devoted 32 years of my life to this place, saying that there is more intellectual fresh air blowing through here than through the places that it plays football (and basketball) against. That derives from its remarkable intellectual diversity. One cannot assume at Cornell that everyone, whether students or faculty, thinks the way you do. In my freshman seminar of seventeen students on some musical topic, only five or six might be from Arts and Sciences. From day one, all seventeen

were obliged to come to terms with and learn to communicate with people arriving with very different intellectual perspectives. The faculty, even when deeply occupied with the affairs of their own departments, live in a larger environment in which the received opinion of one group cannot be counted on to persuade another.

Cornell is in fact greater than the sum of its extremely good parts because every part of it derives strength, I would say intellectually but certainly in competitive terms, from its association with the others. Without the quality of its Arts and Sciences, Cornell becomes Davis or a smaller Michigan State. Without the quality of its Agriculture and Life Sciences and others of the contract colleges, Cornell becomes an also-ran in the Ivy League. And so forth.

Responsibility Center Management in anything like its pure form will drive Cornell's components apart and give away its greatest strength. If every time a student walks across the street, money needs to change hands, and that becomes the University's guiding principle, students will soon be prevented from crossing the street and will be the lesser for it.

All of this calls for the University's leaders to make decisions based on values rather than formulas—a grave and difficult responsibility. But it also calls on the University's faculty and students to understand and appreciate what they have to gain from their association with one another across all boundaries. This is a value worth building a university on, making it a place where the life of the restless mind is prized above all else and remains ever open to the awesome beauties of nature and of peoples and cultures different from one's own and of creations of the human imagination that explore what it is to be a human being and why one might want to be one.

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