Demands for political orthodoxy seem to appear, at least in the twentieth century, in thirty-year cycles. Thus, in the 1930s, we witnessed the rise of Hitlerism and Stalinism, both of which were aimed as much on purging their respective parties of differences as providing the “masses” with ideological guidance. In the 1960s, politics shifted its ground from parties to movements, and hence the demands for political orthodoxy were of necessity more covert, or simply amorphous. In the 1990s, political extremism abandoned the fields of parties and movements alike, and took to the universities as the foci, a source of organizational strength. As a result, political orthodoxy has increasingly centered in the very places that presumably are dedicated to open and unfettered freedom of speech.

The differentiated sources of the assault on free speech—for that after all are what demands for political correctness are about—have served to obscure the actual origins of the term itself. The notion of “inner party democracy” within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (and hence by extension to parties of a similar type in large nations such as China and small nations such as Cuba) was operationally transformed into the “dialectical” idea that a political position or task would be announced, then debated, then agreed upon. Once that Party consensus had been reached, and a proper line hammered out, it became by definition, the correct position. Of course, in actual practice, the debates were minimal, linked to controlled situations, and if held, confined to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Then the message or directive was transmitted to the rank and file, whose task it became to carry out the line—whether in terms of production, politics or people. Thus, in its origins, political correctness was a function of party discipline.

For a brief time, this obnoxious doctrine of political correctness was confined to the realm of party practice. But it soon spread to the realm of theory, that is, to the world of ideas as such. Thus, in debates over “mechanism” and “dialectics” in philosophy, losers were dubbed to have been politically incorrect, or worse, destructive of the tasks of the people (as defined by the Party). And this went into the deepest interstices of professional life. So that in disputations over the place of Spinoza in the history of Marxist philosophy, the losers to the
debate lost not only on points but also in lives. George Kline has documented this strange chapter, one of many, in the history of Soviet thought. The same process went on in every cultural realm—from architecture to music in culture, and from biology to physics in science.

As the process of ideological institutionalization in Soviet Communist life proceeded, the areas that came under the ever-watchful eyes of Party officials increased. Demands for political orthodoxy reached into every realm: the fine arts, literature, music, and the dance. Professional conferences were transformed into witch-hunts. Political correctness came to be defined less by what it included than what it categorically excluded—or even extirpated. Hence, in music, the more ambitious efforts of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and Khachaturian—the big three of Russian music in the Soviet epoch—came under particular attack. For example, Tikhon Khrennikov, appointed by Stalin to administer Soviet music, attacked Shostakovich at the first Composers' Congress in the following, all too familiar, terms: “Armed with clear Party directives, we will put a final end to any manifestations of anti-people formalism and decadence, no matter what defensive coloration they may take on.” And the greatly admired ballet, Spartak, by Khachaturian, could only go forward, once the composer and his librettist were able to offer documentary evidence that Spartacus was a person who figured prominently in Marx's analysis of ancient slavery and slave revolt! On stage, the situation was not much different: because of Stalin's displeasures, neither Shakespeare's Hamlet nor King Lear was performed—at least not openly nor in the Moscow Art Theater. To examine the memoirs of the great Dmitri Shostakovich is to learn the full fury of a single party State. Defending the recantation of the poet Anna Akhmatova, he simply points out to her critics: “What could she have said? That she thinks she's living in an insane asylum of a country? That she despises and hates Zhdanov and Stalin? Yes, she could have said that, but then no one would have ever seen her again.” Behind the political correctness was the police state.

In its Soviet origins, political correctness was centered in “the new man” (women were simply incorporated into this strange form of manhood). There was a strong push for every area of scientific endeavor to confirm the philosophy of dialectical materialism as interpreted by Stalin and his Party cohorts to deny genetic variation in the name of environmental conditioning, relativity in the name of the absolute objectivity of matter, and abnormal or neurotic behavior as simply the absence of proper work therapy. There was not a single area of scientific and intellectual work exempted from not just political orthodoxy but party directives. Robert Service, in his outstanding work on A History of Twentieth-Century Russia, summarizes this situation well.

Stalin gave things a political twist. His spokesman [here reference is made to the immediate post-World War Two period, not pre-war period] Zhdanov, despite negligible training, breezily denounced relativity theory, cybernetics and quantum mechanics as “bourgeois” and “reactionary.” Crude ideologically motivated interventions were made in the research institutes for the natural sciences. The relativist concepts of Einstein were an irritant to the monoliths of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism.... Persecution of scholarship was accompanied by the continued promotion of cranks. By the 1940s the pseudo-scientist Lysenko was claiming to have developed strains of wheat that could grow within the Arctic Circle. His gruff manner was attractive to Stalin. The result was disaster for professional biology: any refusal to condone Lysenko's hypotheses was punished by arrest. Where biology
led, chemistry, psychology and linguistics quickly followed.... In his quirky booklet of 1950, Marxism and the Question of Linguistics, Stalin took it upon himself to insist that the Russian language originated in the provinces of Kursk and Orel. The entire intelligentsia was constrained to applaud the booklet as an intellectual breakthrough and to apply its wisdom to other fields of scholarship.

By the time the concept of political correctness became the official doctrine of the world communist movement, it had been transformed from a cultural accoutrement into a necessary characteristic of Marxist-Leninist principles. In anything but a jocular mood, Mao Tse Tung, in his famous work On The Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People, wrote that "not to have a correct political point of view is like having no soul." Apart from the dubious premise that Marxist-Leninists believe in the idea of a soul, the founder of the Chinese Communist Party appreciated the fact that what started as a debate within cultural circles of the Soviet Communist Party had in fact become essential theory for Party organization as such.

The difference between the Soviet origins and Maoist amplifications of political correctness and the North American contemporary uses of extrinsic litmus tests are not inconsequential. In the former case, the orthodoxy was imposed from the outside, from Party leaders and directives. In the present case, no such external mechanism is required, unless one considers professional societies of language teachers and professional social scientists external to the process. In that sense, the corrosion of scholarship, the application of tests of ascriptive loyalties, is a far weightier manner. Indeed, political correctness extends from the number of "minorities" in science and engineering courses to whether one can speak of a special gender based on race or based on theoretical constructs. The most notorious illustrations are the new spate of works emphasizing the "central opposition between European-American and feminist and post colonial studies." But this is a story for a later time frame.

Within the Soviet Union, different artists behaved and reacted differently to the demand for political orthodoxy: in literature a Maxim Gorky capitulated, Tikhon Khrennikov and Alexander Fadeev fawned, Konstantin Semyonov obeyed, Boris Pasternak quietly resisted, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn categorically opposed and went into exile. Jewish writers, or better, writers of Jewish extraction, fared badly. They were liquidated, humiliated, and if fortunate sent into exile and survived as persons. Amongst that group, people like Ilya Ehrenburg performed nefarious acts on behalf of the Stalinist regime as a mechanism of survival, and, it is said, to assist others less fortunate. Again, libraries are filled with tomes on these arcane subjects and forgotten personages. The point that does not dissolve easily is that, in its origins, the ideal of political correctness was achieved only by the most draconian outcomes—the sacrifice of human life itself.

The Soviet campaign for orthodoxy reached its most fevered pitch in the early 1950s, as also did the campaign for correct thought in linguistics. In "debates" between dictator Joseph Stalin and academician Y.M. Marr, the ostensible issue was whether language is a "superstructural" phenomenon, that is, a reflection of social class, or a "base" phenomenon connected directly to the national character of a people. In all candor, it is the case that Stalin's views were closer to the empirical realities than were Marr's. The tragedy is that Marr thought he was pursuing a Stalinist line in asserting the superstructural features of language. Stalin upbraided Marr, and in the process spoke in rhetorical terms: "Is it the case that Comrade Marr is correct in
his assertions?" The answer came quickly: "No it is not correct." This would be followed by what is euphemistically described as "murmurs" from the audience, doubtless tinged with relief at knowing that academicians other than Marr were not being singled out—for the moment at least.

This goes to the psychological heart of political correctness. A discovery of the Stalinists is that it does not really take much to intimidate a crowd of intellectuals. All one has to do is single out a particular person for criticism, and, if necessary, later for exile and execution, and the orthodoxy is sure to follow. Some of the leading scholars within Soviet life understood this so well that they began to speak of Stalin as a divinely inspired person, or even as a god, the "light of the sun" itself. The grotesque spectacle of academic figures falling all over themselves in adulation and worship of the source of all political correctness haunted Soviet science and letters for years after Stalin's death. In areas such as biology, in which Stalinist falsifiers like Trofim Lysenko gave notice that all characteristics are essentially acquired and not inherited, and by implication, that the science of genetics itself was either a Papist or a Jewish plot, the field itself was so rendered for so long, that applied agrarian activities were set back for decades, and contributed mightily to the collapse of the collective farm system.

While many academics and scientists chose silence as a response, withholding support was at times found to be intolerable. The reticence to engage in manifest support for the politically correct line was met by derision. "Idea-lessness" was itself viewed as an intolerable condition of Soviet intellectual life. Every aspect of cultural life—from films to cookbooks—came under scrutiny. And as the literature makes abundantly clear, while some resistance was in evidence, particularly passive resistance among world famous composers and writers, the overwhelming majority of academics, gathered in a variety of intellectual trade unions was only too happy to support the Party position, and use the situation as a way to change university rank and artistic privilege. From the promise of a society based on the best and the brightest, without regard to rank and background, the Soviet Union evolved into the society based on the cleverest and sometimes cruelest, with full regard to Party rank and Serial number.

The central concern herein is less the national origins of political correctness, or taxonomy of ideology, than the assault within sectors of the academy on the autonomy of science and social research. This assault is made in the name of righting ancient wrongs, but all too often this is a thin disguise for wronging ancient rights, such as subtle denials, from a variety of circles, that all human beings are created equal, endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights as a result of their humanness. Such rejections can be made in the name of the biological superiority of one group or person over another or as in the more common view of today that all human differences are somehow hierarchical and therefore unjust. For the extremists in our ranks, usurping the work of God has become routine behavior.

Professional activities and intellectual orientations are constantly bundled within democratic societies. The multiple requirements of real world chores have made this bundling inevitable. Speaking for my own work in publishing terms: On any given day a librarian in Burundi will ask for donations because one or another ethnic tribe has burned his institution to the ground. An economist in Havana will request access to a specific book or journal in a land where hard currency exchanges are virtually impossible outside the black market. A sociologist in California will inquire how
to handle his humiliation in having to make a public apology to students and faculty for the "crime" of sexually harassing a female professor, when what he claims to have done is to engage in old-fashioned vigorous debate. A psychologist from Canada appeals for help in responding to a granting agency that has charged that an application deals too much with the Holocaust in a proposal dedicated to the suppression of memory in a totalitarian context. A black prisoner will write for copies, any copies, of Society in a closed environment in which library budgets are entirely absorbed by legal texts. We must receive at least 100 such requests annually. Then there are rejections from reputable journals and magazines of advertisements for books that seem ideologically risky despite their scholarly content. These everyday requests and rejections are reminders that however we are born, we do not always remain equal. It is one thing to prattle about constitutional safeguards, but quite another to actually exercise free speech in a forthright and vigorous fashion.

The needs of others and constraints on self serve as a steady reminder that in a free society the celebration of purely personal fulfillment is fatuous as a goal unto itself, one that can lead to the degradation of the human spirit. It does this by converting a goal into an operating principle: cowardice—or, as Dennis Wrong notes in his concept of "oversocialization," a reticence to speak frankly and deal fairly with dangerous themes. It maximizes the idea of personal safety while undermining the idea of public service. Utilitarianism becomes a confused cluster of ends in which the pleasure principle is conflated into the normal desires for happiness. Speaking plainly becomes a risk rather than a reward.

My lifetime concern is a world of learning that serves as an umbrella between professing and publishing. In the world of learning, the supposedly genteel universe of discourse that embraces such arts as teaching, writing, and publishing, the reduction of value to utility has had especially disastrous consequences. By locating so many academic awards and emoluments in consensus behavior instead of authentic and perhaps conflicted behavior, we generate conformity rather than encourage creativity. The pursuit of success is too easily reduced to a quiescence that may yield a deep sense of personal unhappiness, displeasure with ourselves for yielding to the powers and authorities that deprive us of the joys of everyday life. Hopefully, this digression into the autobiographical highlights the terrible dangers of political orthodoxy.

II

The efforts to right historic wrongs quickly, of men playing at God, and to assign blame for such wrongs to those closest at hand and most vulnerable, hardly are new or unique to American society. The first half of the century bears witness to the utter corruption and decimation of science and social research in Germany under Hitler, Russia under Stalin, and, closer in time and space, a series of lesser tyrannies imposing an iron will over the course of learning. Indeed, most human rights annuals identify roughly 20 out of 200 nations that practice a thing remotely identifiable as free speech. While it is not axiomatic that dictatorships equate to anti-science, there is evidently a strong propensity to harness science toward totalitarian ends, and when this is not possible, to destroy that which cannot be harnessed. In a nutshell, dictators often have legitimate complaints. What they lack are plausible solutions. A quick perusal of the Nazi and Communist prototypes makes clear this gulf between complaints and solutions. It may also help set the stage for the context and magnitude of the present-day American dilemma with respect to sci-
ence and learning in general.

The Nazis tapped some strong German sentiments in their pre-rule years by pointing to the bitter consequences of World War I reparations, the disincentive to a normal, healthy economy under the Weimar Republic, and its encouragement, through a policy of managed economic bribes, of a disastrous inflation. These factors combined to sap the strength of a new democracy and made possible the rise of a brutal dictatorship that bridled a runaway inflation by a tight rein over labor and industry alike. This was a concern enunciated by John Maynard Keynes in *The Economic Consequences of Peace* and not just reducible to a piece of Nazi doggerel. The punishment of the vanquished was an element in the rise of political extremism and orthodoxy under National Socialist rule in Germany.

What Hitler and his cohorts failed to understand is that the foreign enemies were as nothing compared to the demons from within. The Third Reich was sapped of its strength long before the Allied invasions in 1944. The Nazis created a house divided against itself by turning German against German; by identifying science with racial purity; by the expulsion of the likes of Einstein and Freud from its scientific academies; by appointing university officials on the basis of their racial backgrounds and party loyalties; by the mobilization of physics to pure war aims; by converting medical science into racist eugenics; and by harnessing social science to demographic efforts seeking to destroy Jewish communities for the goal of mass murder. In the denial of the autonomy of science, one found the end of the Nazi era in its very beginnings, in the structure of its heartless ideology. Totalitarian regimes have the capacity to harness scientific work to practical, if destructive, ends. Less well appreciated is how dictators frustrate the process of discovery and invention, and as a result, seriously erode the very regimes they seek to perpetuate.

Max Weber well understood this process of totalitarian rule: how science becomes anti-science for supposedly noble ends. The process of incubation was well advanced even before Weimar Germany, much less Nazi Germany. Time has dulled our memory of speeches made in 1918, but it has not dulled the sharp blade with which Weber spoke fifteen years before the ascending power of the Nazi behemoth:

> It is said, and I agree, that politics is out of place in the lecture room. It does not belong there on the part of the students.... Neither does politics belong in the lecture room on the part of the docents, and when the docent is scientifically concerned with politics, it belongs there least of all. To take a practical political stand is one thing, and to analyze political structures and party positions is another. When speaking in a political meeting about democracy, one does not hide one’s personal standpoint; indeed to come out clearly and take a stand is one’s damned duty. The words one uses in such a meeting are not a means of scientific analysis but a means of canvassing votes and winning over others. They are not plowshares to loosen the soil of contemplative thought; they are swords against the enemies: such words are weapons. It would be an outrage, however, to use words in this fashion in a lecture or in the lecture room.... To the prophet and demagogue, it is said: “Go your ways out into the streets and speak openly to the world,” that is, speak where criticism is possible. In the lecture room we stand opposite our audience and it has to remain silent. I deem it irresponsible to exploit the circumstances that for the sake of their career the students have to attend a teacher’s course while there is nobody present to oppose him with criticism. The task of the teacher is to serve the students with his knowledge and scientific experience and not to imprint upon them his personal political views.
That such a notion of science as a vocation gave way to politics as a passion only fifteen years later in Nazi Germany in no way weakens the impact of Weber's message. That betrayal of truth was in no small part responsible for the collapse of the Third Reich as such.

The same is the case for the Soviet era in Russia. Speaking before the First Conference of the Russian Industrial Managers in 1931, Joseph Stalin outlined the tragic history of old Russia. He dramatically and quite properly pointed out that "the history of old Russia is the history of defeats due to backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol Khans. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal barons. She was beaten by the Polish-Lithuanian squires. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her for her backwardness."

What Stalin failed to understand is that his policies toward science and culture would perpetuate that tragic history in the new Russia, the Russia of Soviet power. Social class and not personal ability came to determine scientific promotions. As a consequence, the history of Soviet Russia is a history of defeats due to a different sort of backwardness. Russia was beaten by the very communist system that presumably was to overcome backwardness. She was beaten by a regime that substituted a specious theory of environmental adaptation in place of the science of genetics. She was beaten by a regime that allowed appointments in mathematics only to party loyalists. She was beaten by nationalistic theories of language that destroyed prospects for social commitment beyond those of ethnicity. She was beaten by a regime that promoted individuals for loyalty to party instead of fealty to science. She was beaten by a regime that rewarded individuals for proletarian purity instead of scientific integrity. She was beaten by a regime that punished minorities for excellence in research that resulted in autonomy of behavior. Finally, she was beaten by a regime that purged and executed those who dared to disagree at all. Russia could overcome the Nazi hordes, but it could not overcome its own Communist ideologies and actions. The search for "the new man" ended in the demise of old tyrants.

Early on in the history of Soviet rule, the great Nobel psychologist and physiologist Ivan Pavlov dared to express the unbridgeable gulf between science and ideology. In so doing, he also gave voice to a growing problem within Soviet ideology of the substitution of personal background variables in place of genuine intelligence. In his address to a Marxist-Leninist cadre in 1923, when it was still barely possible to express plain truths, Pavlov stated to an audience of youthful communist loyalists:

> When you enter science you will find that science and dogmatism are entirely different things. Science and free criticism, these are equivalent. But dogmatism is not suitable. There is no need to bring up examples. How much has avowed truth? Take for example the indivisibility of the atom. Years have passed and nothing has remained of this. And all science is saturated with these examples. And if you respect science, as it follows that you become thoroughly acquainted with it, then in spite of the fact that you are communists, or members of the workmen's schools set up by the Soviets, if you acknowledge that Marxism and communism are not absolute truths, that it is only a theory in which there may be part of a truth, but in which there is perhaps no truth, then you will look on all life with freedom of view, but not in slavery.

The victory of the proletarian, partisan theory of "science" cost the lives of many thousands of scientists and academics in a futile effort to preserve a system intellectually dead on arrival. Worse yet, it cost the lives of millions of
people who, in the name of a dogmatic ideology, were ill-equipped and poorly-led in what the Russians still refer to as the Great Patriotic War. As if external enemies were not sufficient, the Soviet leaders engaged in the massive destruction of its own peoples in a genocide unequaled and perhaps only paralleled by the Nazi leaders.

While I would not wish to affirm an analogy of current American social and political life with that of the Nazi German and Soviet Russian regimes, certain parallels are ominous, and the risks dangerous. Once again, we find a corruption from within that is either ignored or dismissed. It is written in an old Jewish proverb that “The urge to forget prolongs exile, the secret of redemption is remembering.” In this case, to remember—at least the horrors of our own century—will help us better understand our own nation in this moment of time. For while in each of the aforementioned dictatorial systems, the political parts of the government made frontal assaults that led to the serious decomposition of the intellectual life of those nations, in the case of the United States it is the other way around: the higher academic communities have set themselves up as the vanguard of the people, offering clarion calls ranging from curbs on the Bill of Rights to demands in the selection and hiring of personnel by quota, based on considerations of gender, race, and class—quite apart from knowledge or talent.

Once again, we find the assertion of well-intentioned people arguing the need to right historic wrongs immediately, in the American case, by asserting theories of affirmative action—creating set-asides for so-called minority businesses that rarely trickle down; shifting the base of appointments from intelligence to experience; adopting quixotic ethnic standards for federal promotions—standards that treat successful minorities as majorities; making university appointments on the basis of gender identity rather than simple talent; encouraging the public display of private sexual preferences through awards, emoluments, and special placements in institutions of higher learning; and, if all else fails, by changing the grading structure on Standard Aptitude Tests to calm the fears of the public with respect to a failing American educational system.

We have reached a point of inversion that passes into perversion. In the recent past, segregation was viewed, and properly so, as an enemy of democratic norms; we now have demands for re-segregation as part of the arsenal of multiculturalism. The separate but equal doctrine, which was the law of the American land in the late nineteenth century and then fearlessly overcome by the middle of this century, is again being touted as an answer to our problems in the late twentieth century. In short, rather than permit the pendulum of progress to come to rest on a consensus, American society witnesses a greater separation and suspicion among races, classes, genders, and religions than in recent memory. We seem to have come full circle: starting the century with separatism as a way of life, compelled to develop integrationist patterns by a series of wars and depressions, and now, in the full flower of affluence and world leadership, being urged to again return to segregation, this time rallying about the flag of pleasantries such as cultural flowering and self-realization. For every achievement in erasing large inequalities we seem to have two demands to generate smaller inequalities. While world resources and supplies may be finite, demands and grievances appear to be infinite.

This shifting ground from equities to biases, however anti-democratic, is at least tolerable as long as it does not affect the vitals of a society. But when
the very core of science itself is invaded, indeed polluted, by attacks on science for its demographic composition, its inability to infuse experience and experiment with love and feeling, we have a return of verstehen theory, to subjectivity, with a vengeance. We start a process of artificial selection that makes science hostage to fashion and social science an active participant in its own decimation. When a legal system is mobilized to support new forms of favoritism in the name of righting historic wrongs, the very soul of American industry and society is sapped, and prospects for American democracy become bleak and stark, the reverse of the intended outcome.

I fully anticipate that such words may not sit well with academics who genuinely want to advance causes deeply held, or seek redress for past wrongs by accelerated means, and who feel less than sanguine about a system that historically has invoked genteel or harsh prejudices to prevent everyone from fully participating in its bounties. This is not a call to reaction, or to set the clock back; not an argument for conservatism in politics or constraint in morality, for to do so would be to perpetuate the very wrongs that American democracy is dedicated to overcoming. But such historical wrongs cannot be overcome by yielding to social demands in an arbitrary and capricious manner or by anointing theories as ultimate truths in the face of everyday realities to the contrary. I do not believe for a moment that a race of people that has given us, in sociology alone, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, James S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, and now William Julius Wilson and Charles V. Willie, will tolerate, much less abide, patronizing placebos from a white table. The constant din at the fringes between white supremacy or black superiority or for that matter, black supremacy or white superiority, does little to put American society on the road to equality. We need to address policy potentials to alleviate inequities, whatever may be their historical sources or current angers.

The task of liberal society is to permit all to gain a place at the starting gate of the struggle to achieve the just, but different ends of each and every person; it is not to guarantee a place at the finish pole for each and every person. A race that ends with everyone arriving at the same time at the finish line in a dead heat is fixed. A society that ends with everyone standing on the same spot is just plain crooked or just plain dead. The lack of innovation, incentive, or invention is more injurious to the survival of a system than foreign armies standing at the gates. This much the United States can, and should, learn from the Nazi German and Soviet Russian experiences.

Equity, like inequity, is an endless process, not a thing. Rights are won; new wrongs are located in the process. This is the way of the world. This is the way of all flesh. Demands are infinite, supplies are finite. The good society must find ways to bring public needs and private rights into some sort of harmonious framework. It is the role of science policy and research to help calibrate the relation of equity to liberty. But when science itself is infected with ideological demands on one side and ascriptive regulations on the other, the aims of the good society, the democratic society, are permanently crippled. We make our society vulnerable to the very forces of political extremism that we have spent the century overcoming in foreign lands. Unpleasant as it may be to contemplate, the slope from Aryan Science to Proletarian Science to Race or Gender Science is not only slippery, but also hard to climb out of in a peaceful or painless way.

It might well be asked why the Soviet system, the source of many aspects of ideas about the politically correct formulations, has been treated so differ-
ently from the Nazi system—their commonalities notwithstanding. And while many theories abound as to this historical anomaly, my own preference is for the assessment delivered by Tony Judt in reviewing The Black Book of Communism (000) by the French writer, Stéphane Courtois. “Communism was applied in the East and justified in the West, whereas Nazism was a Western abomination whose evils were experienced closer to home. It is thus difficult for the left-liberal intelligentsia of the West, and not just in Paris, to let go of its memories and illusions, to having been no wiser or better than Fascism’s many foreign admirers in the 1930s.” One would have to add that the common cause of Soviet Russia and the democratic West shared in World War Two gave a powerful chance to Marxist ideology at precisely a time in history when the worst scars of the depression were resolved in the West. The romance of communism thus persisted far longer and burned brighter than the earlier fascination with Nazism.

The lessons of twentieth-century history are clear enough, even as the capacities of people to understand that history is less in evidence than ever before imaginable. We would do well, each in our own way, each walking in the path of science and social science, to maintain the banner of quality in research and integrity in knowledge. We have seen the consequences of a science for society in which color blindness is replaced by color determination; racial equity is replaced by racial bigotry; religious freedom is replaced by religious fanaticism; universal fairness is replaced by clannish bias; and simple civility is replaced by gangsterism in personal relations. I intend no lecture on policy, which will evolve naturally enough once the dangers to a democratic society are perceived. Indeed, perhaps we need a moratorium on new policies to absorb fully those already enacted into laws.

I would like to offer the words of the late Robert Cooley Angell, sociologist, socialist, and American, as evidence of how far down the road to intolerance the softer social sciences have moved in the past half century. In reading remarks he authored in 1941 under the rubric of The Integration of American Society, I could not help but be astonished by the change in theme as well as tone that has taken place in our intellectual life over the past half century. The words of Angell, along with the words of other Americans like Robert E. Park and Robert Maclver, or Europeans like Karl Mannheim and Thomas Masaryk, to name a few—sound not only old fashioned, but downright quixotic. To those who have been dismissive, and even abusive, of my assertions about the decomposition of sociology, I dare take the liberty of reciting the admonitions of at least one old-fashioned Midwesterner. Professor Angell notes:

There is some connection between the danger of social disintegration and the rise of free-standing groups. The latter have disrupted an older type of moral community and have not been able to foster the development of an equally strong one of a new type. This accounts for two shortcomings from the viewpoint of societal integration: the tendency to emphasize noncommon interests, and the tendency to nullify common values through differences in perception of the existing situation.... In a society in which most needs can be satisfied with money, one cannot ignore the importance of lessening disparities of property and income. Such lessening cannot be achieved abruptly without running the danger of killing our democracy. But once a start is made the gains should be cumulative. A reduction in property and income differentials should breed more understanding, and more understanding should bring into the area of discussion programs aimed at further reduction.... No one expects that they would easily agree upon particular solutions, but they could at least can-
vass alternatives with mutual respect....
In a country where the standards are as materialistic as in the United States, many will regard improvement in technology as the main line of progress. They will not realize that such improvement does nothing to strengthen the foundations of our society. The supreme test of democracy will be the promptness and the intelligence with which we meet this challenge.

While we may hope that those charged with social policy and social practice are up to the tasks defined for us half a century ago by Angell, this is neither the time nor the place to offer palliatives. The continuing struggles that define our public needs happen to be the same struggles that bring private pleasures—or, if you will, the fulfillment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. If we fail, if we fall prey to the gods of totalitarian tyrannies and reductionist fanaticism, then the sciences, and here I include the social sciences, will be nothing more than instruments serving deadly masters. This sort of political positivism must be resisted with all of our human hearts as well as human resources. That the outcome is actually in doubt should remind us all of the urgency of this struggle.

If we bury our collective heads in the academic sands and claim to have achieved personal pleasure in doing so, we will have failed of our private values, no less than public responsibilities. The democratic imaginations—in small letters—is comprised of two parts: the willingness to engage in public discourse without being humiliated or liquidated, and a respect for truths that compel us to change our minds—also without being humiliated or liquidated. Being wrong should be corrected, not punished. Being right should be an occasion for quiet reflection, not raucous celebration on the dead bodies of victims.

III

Having sounded the alarms, let me note that there are basic differences between the former, quite dead Soviet Union and the present quite alive United States, and the West in general. Despite a growing literature sounding proper and, at times, improper concerns, the analogy between totalitarian and democratic regimes must itself be viewed as a bulwark against the worst infections of orthodoxy. The pluralist content of politics, the multiple sources of information, the market bases of the economy, all contribute to distinguish totalitarian and democratic systems.

First, to start with, a Party monolith dominated the political leadership of the Soviet Union. That is not the case in Western democracies, where multiparty systems continue to expand and thrive. Second, the culture of authoritarianism was deeply rooted in Russian traditional life. Czarism, or Caesarism, is a constant threat in the West. Indeed, it is a Western export from ancient times. But it failed to take root in the New World, and certainly not in places like the United States and Canada.

Second, the extraordinary range of institutions of learning and culture in the West argues against the sort of political orthodoxy made possible in either Communist Russia or Nazi Germany. Not only is there diversification in matters of curriculum, but also no less in types of educational structures as such. To this must be added the fact that sources of funding are extremely diverse, starting with parents asked to pay tuition on behalf of children.

Third, the non-statist aspects of higher education prevent any hardening of political correctness—at least in the near future. And, finally, we must note that as orthodoxy makes inroads in established institutions of higher learning, new types of agencies spring up. We witness the huge growth of “think tanks,” which, despite their own commitments, make any overall system of the correct feasible.
Fourth, the politicization of learning and teaching has taken place unevenly. While the humanities and the softer social sciences have been particularly vulnerable in the West, and hence readily penetrated, the physical and biological sciences have been far less subject to such radicalizing "hits." Beyond calls for more minorities and women, the sciences seem to have developed strong if quiet resistance to political orthodoxies.

Fifth, however lacking in methodological rigor the current wave of subjectivism and expressive individualism may be, it lacks the terrorist potentials of the collectivist concentration of ideology in a party or state apparatus. This may serve as small comfort to those who properly appreciate the breakdown of mediating agencies, such as the institutions of higher education, but the irrationalism of extreme individualism is a less compelling assault on learning than the super-rationalism of the totalitarian system.

The existence of political orthodoxy has become a substantial problem in higher education because it has become a norm in the higher reaches of governance. Its sources and models are derived from totalitarian regimes, especially those of the Communist countries, that managed to link political correctness to affirmative action, that is, advancement of the persons and causes of the vanguard proletariat. The limits of such doctrinaire thinking are rooted in the democratic institutions of Western societies and in the traditions of the universities and colleges of the West. And while "history" is not a mandate for quiescence or self-satisfaction, it does cause us to be careful not to extend analogical reasoning to a breaking point. Shrill responses to exaggerated assaults on the functioning of education in a free society do little to improve the situation, and may actually cause unsuspecting people to exaggerate a very real problem. Political correctness is a problem and not a caricature—and merits being treated with exactitude and vigilance.

My preference is to treat as a problem political orthodoxy rather than correctness as such. There is a tendency, mistaken however understandable, to treat any and all claims for correctness as some anti-democratic bias, and correspondingly, a denial of individual freedom. The trouble with this position is its implicit denial of standards and measurements that have an objective basis. In a wide panoply of areas, from the structure of logic to the character of language itself, we accept the reality of proper usage, or if you will, correct and incorrect thought.

The cutting edge of the notion of political correctness, the key lessons bequeathed to us in this century of totalitarian regimes, is not the existence of absolute standards of what is good and evil or right and wrong, but the very reverse: its permeability, its changing characteristics. A free society must hold out the promise of difference, the need to avoid, except in extreme cases such as the existence of social order itself, punishment for holding and advocating a variety of beliefs that may or may not be found correct by the practices of the age no less than the theories of society under which people live. It was the great sin, the governing curse of Marxist-Leninism as the governing ideology of a vast Soviet empire, to fudge the distinction between right and wrong at the epistemological level with life and death at the societal level. The struggle against political orthodoxy must be understood not as a simple assault on proper standards of academic conduct, or what might be called an orderly mind. More precisely, it is a defense of the democratic realm, an arena, which includes the right to be wrong, and the prospects of advocacy without brutal punishment.
Suggested Readings


