

others (“The Intellectual and Society: The Social Function of the ‘Fool’ in the Twentieth Century,” *On Intellectuals: Theoretical Studies, Case Studies*, ed. Philip Rieff [New York: Anchor, 1970]). Yet despite their vulnerability to institutions and other people, intellectuals convey a magisterial self-confidence that can quiet the laughter of their audiences and create uneasiness. For intellectuals are neither narcissistic, parading their personalities, nor ascetic, maintaining a glacial impersonality as if they are solely conduits for concepts. A culture’s embodied affirmation of the reality of an inner self, they are a free contemplative energy yearning for permanent shared truths. Their intensity may expose the moral and mental lassitude of everyone else and may therefore offend. Yet a healthy culture accepts the affronts of its intellectuals, since it understands that evolving serious discriminations out of a nuanced description of a society demands attentiveness, passion, and lack of compromise.

But attentiveness, passion, and lack of compromise are the attributes that an advanced technical, managerial, consumer society confounds. Concentration disperses when the object world thins to images; passion goes when, after sufficient betrayal and confusion, people become affectless and paranoid; conviction falters when everyone self-protectively refuses to make judgments. Some intellectuals today continue to resist these and other stultifying trends; they remain selfless within a therapeutic culture that has largely replaced thoughtful polemic with personal confession, simple in the midst of technomania and social-status display, and astonishing in an unastonished society whose experts arrive at conclusions immediately. They remain Lionel Trilling’s “adversarial culture” (*The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism* [New York: Viking, 1959]). But for how long?

An adversarial culture, after all, needs a public culture against which to express itself. But by the twenty-first century, a technology of withdrawal—computers, gated communities, cellular phones, automobiles—will have attenuated any public realm. The intellectual’s withdrawal from the world was philosophical, tactical; the postmodern American’s withdrawal is reflexive, visceral, a response to an inchoate sense of threat. Unlike the intellectual’s temporary retreats, the postmodern American’s is permanent, based on terror of risk.

Sensing this oncoming social catastrophe, writers like Richard Sennett, Michael Walzer, and Robert Putnam have suggested ways of revitalizing community. Architects have planned communitarian towns. Yet the future clearly belongs to armored isolates. In the transformation of politics into simulacral effects, in the dissolution of social interchange into cyberchat, how will intellectuals situate themselves?

I anticipate that the next century’s intellectuals will be driven deeper into monkish retreat from the “desiccated life” of the “dead souls” around them. This removal from the society of the spectacle will be deemed bizarre, but, in a curious twist, the result will not be the final dismissal of the intellectual as a cultural force. On the contrary, there is already evidence of the elevation of the intellectual into a secular god. The general hunger for reality and passion grows apace, as the popularity of Gregorian chant, of Henryk Gorecki’s music, and of Sister Wendy Beckett’s art criticism suggests. Of course, a people adrift in sterility does not believe what the monks and Gorecki and Sister Wendy believe; such a populace doesn’t even believe in the existence of the world. But it desperately needs *their* belief. The intellectuals of the next century will be those whose “task in the world,” as a nun explains in Don DeLillo’s novel *White Noise*, is to “believe things no one else takes seriously. . . . As belief shrinks from the world, people find it more necessary than ever that someone believe. Wild-eyed men in caves. Nuns in black. Monks who do not speak. We are your lunatics. We surrender our lives to make your nonbelief possible” (New York: Penguin, 1985).

The new servitude of intellectuals, which Camus could not have imagined, will be to model conviction. The content of their convictions will not matter; merely their holding convictions passionately will draw the rest of humanity to their light.

MARGARET SOLTAN
George Washington University

Today, Tomorrow: The Intellectual in the Academy and in Society

The possibility of democratic mass education is for me the pertinent issue in the debate on the future of intellectuals. The dream of democratic mass education has been to make intellectual culture the possession of every citizen, not just an elite. The dream remains unrealized, only partly because access to quality education is still restricted by race and class. There’s another kind of denial of “access” that’s experienced by those who *do* get through school and college, a result of the failure of educational institutions to make intellectual culture generally intelligible. Intellectual culture includes diverse skills and forms of knowledge, but for my purposes it can be reduced to the ability to argue, to reflect, to analyze, to criticize, to formulate and contest ideas. Everyone exercises

these “intellectual” capacities in some way. But it takes a command of intellectual discourse and its generalizing vocabularies to exercise them effectively enough to intervene in the conversation of one’s culture.

In *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons from a Small School in Harlem* (1995), the high school educator Deborah Meier writes of the transformative moment when one of her students becomes able to start a sentence with the words “I have a theory that. . . .” The power to say these words and to back them up—that’s as good a definition of an intellectual as I know. It’s also a good statement of the power that democratic mass education should make available to every student.

But American educators and the American public have always been ambivalent about democratic mass education. Neither has been quite convinced that it is possible or desirable for more than a small minority of the citizenry to become intellectuals. That democratizing intellectuality makes many uneasy is not surprising in a culture in which *intellectual* is still often synonymous with *snob* or *elitist*. But if intellectuality is suspect for being undemocratic, it is even more suspect for potentially being too democratic. There is something unsettling about the prospect of a greatly enlarged number of Americans becoming able to say, “I have a theory that. . . .” for such a citizenry would be unpredictable and hard to control.

Academics and nonacademics have conspired in an unspoken agreement that American schools and colleges will not attempt to turn more than a small minority of their students into eggheads. It is considered normal and sufficient if perhaps ten percent of school and college students become seriously committed to intellectual pursuits. As Arthur G. Powell, Eleanor Farrar, and David K. Cohen reveal in *The Shopping Mall High School* (1985), American schools strike a tacit bargain with students that says, in effect: We know that few of you will take a serious intellectual attitude toward schoolwork, something that’s reserved for the nerds and the college- and graduate school-bound; that’s OK—we’ll provide you with an alternative curriculum of unthreatening courses and social activities that will enable you to get through. We won’t bother you too much if you don’t bother us.

Colleges and universities enforce a higher standard, but the tacit bargain operates there as well. Those who become insiders to the intellectual culture of the university tend to be those who were already half-socialized into the club when they arrived. For the majority, it is enough if they show up, do the assigned work, get the degree, and move on. Thus one hears college professors admit (or boast) that they teach to the top ten or fifteen percent of their students, who are capable of “getting it”; the rest presumably will never do so and don’t wish to. Some professors,

however, become defensive at the suggestion that they do not reach the majority. In either case, the point is to avoid asking how many are being reached, lest educators be forced to recognize that democratic education is failing.

And yet, developments over the last generation have unsettled these tacitly negotiated bargains and given intellectuality a new respectability. Even as the market for college teachers has collapsed, intellectual skills have become more widely marketable in an information economy that turns certain forms of critical thinking into cultural capital. To be sure, it is often the intellectuality of technocrats, computer wizards, and policy wonks that gets rewarded. Yet the current success of academic public intellectuals in the media suggests that the intellectuality of the cultural critic is coming into demand as well.

There are even signs that good old American anti-intellectualism is on the defensive, if hardly obsolete. Whereas American conservatives once happily surrendered the egghead image to the left, they now contend for it, as the prominence of figures like William Kristol or even Newt Gingrich shows. The public interest in the culture war over gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality and in the attendant conflicts over social philosophies has made the ability to formulate cultural arguments and analyses a crucial skill for work in journalism, public policy, and the corporate world. In all this, the academy may even lag behind the rest of the culture. Perhaps academics are so used to feeling despised and marginalized that they fail to notice the sudden demand for the kind of intellectuality they represent. An America that once scorned academic intellectuals now wishes to join them, but it needs more help than it is getting.

GERALD GRAFF
University of Chicago

As is well known, the term *intellectual* arose during the Dreyfus affair, although it might be argued that the phenomenon to which it pointed had been around at least since the Enlightenment. In the Dreyfus affair, *intellectual* was a fighting word, not a simple description. Anti-Dreyfusards attacked intellectuals as meddlers, and Dreyfusards took up the challenge and somewhat grandiosely defended the role of intellectuals in affirming individual justice as the foundation of modern democracies.

In the more or less specifically modern, critical sense, intellectuals are a subset of the intelligentsia (specialized “head workers,” in contrast to hand workers); they have a distinct relation to ideology as a secular displacement of religion, producing, disseminating, and criticizing it. The intellectual has characteristically sought to move from specialized work (including that of the writer or academic)

to activity in the public sphere with political implications, even when that activity is confined to the published word. Hence Durkheim in his contribution to the Dreyfus case saw the intellectual as emerging from the academic or literary-artistic world and contributing to debates affecting public values and political issues. With a more insistently leftist twist, Sartre's "Plea for Intellectuals" defined the intellectual as someone who does not mind his or her own business—that is to say, someone recruited from the world of specialization and the division of labor but who contributes to the discussion of public issues that cannot be confined to any one specialty or discrete profession. In his *Society and Democracy in Germany*, Ralf Dahrendorf insisted on the critical public role of intellectuals, who should see themselves not as state-conservative defenders of authority but as gadflies, even heirs of court jesters and fools.

Durkheim, Sartre, and Dahrendorf largely saw the intellectual as the critical consciousness of society or even of humanity that addresses particular issues in terms of universal values. Although criticized by Foucault, such a conception still has its defenders (for example, Tzvetan Todorov in *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in the Concentration Camps*). Foucault stressed the importance of the specific intellectual, who begins with an intimate knowledge of a relatively specialized area, addresses problems bearing on it, and broadens his or her horizon of activity and concern without totalizing it. Although I accept the prima facie dubiousness of any claim to represent or speak for all humanity, I would insist on the need to see how assertions of universal values or rights function in specific situations. Moreover, in both specific and universalistic conceptions of the intellectual, an expert (or what Sartre terms the subaltern functionary of the superstructures!) moves beyond the realm of specialized knowledge and practice to engage issues that are not amenable to technical solutions.

In the United States today, these issues have been raised with respect to the so-called public intellectual. Because of their subject positions, African American intellectuals have been the most visible public intellectuals, but this role, situated beyond delimited expert knowledge and technique, may be engaged in various ways by those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Within the academy, the attempt to supplement or complement specialized knowledge and professional activity with the role of the intellectual is not universally supported. Particularly in certain fields (such as history), research on its own terms and for its own sake has been as tenacious a norm as the notion of business as business or art for art's sake. Moreover, it is difficult to address with insight public issues bearing on contested values and to apply those

values to particular situations. It is even more difficult to elaborate viable alternatives to tendencies in modern society one might be inclined to criticize (for example, consumerism, careerism, and evangelical capitalism). Formalism and sustained allusiveness or indirection have, I think, been compelling options in the recent past for understandable reasons, such as the dangers of certain kinds of political commitment (notably those inspiring a quest for secular redemption or salvation) and the difficulties in making cogent recommendations for social and political reconstruction. Clearly, it is less daunting to provide informed and engaging analyses in one's specialized field than to say intelligent, convincing, unhackneyed things as a public intellectual.

Despite the apparent difficulties, I would affirm the desirability of relating scholarship and critical intellectual activity. The goal would be to enact in one's research an informed concern with specific questions of public value and policy. To the extent that this approach is feasible, it would mitigate the opposition between specialized research and public-intellectual activity without resolving what may be a creative tension between them. There have already been efforts in this direction—for example, in feminist and postcolonial scholarship—from which one can learn a great deal. The result need not be a presentist, projective reprocessing of an object of study in order to find vehicles for one's values or current political concerns. Indeed, the outcome might well be an ability the researcher acquires to be interrogated by others or the past in ways that raise questions for contemporary commitments. In any event, such an approach would enjoin an attempt to address research problems in a manner that raised questions for one's own assumptions as well as those of the object of inquiry.

In the academy, the approach I am suggesting would imply the pertinence of a fourth category for evaluating work, beyond teaching, research, and service. The fourth category would be something like critical intellectual citizenship. It would legitimate forms of reflection and writing that are not confined to specialized research, it would involve active participation in lectures, conferences, and other events that went beyond one's area of expertise and raised the question of the bearing of intellectual activity and research on public values and issues, and it would include "outreach" in which the academy could be brought into more vital contact with the larger society.

At present the humanities are experiencing a theoretical lull. The incredible rush of theories that swept through the universities and colleges—particularly departments of literature—a few years ago no longer have the same force or fascination. The decline of enthusiasm and engagement is at times evident in graduate students, not to

mention undergraduates, both of whom are understandably concerned with preparation for a fickle job market. But the virtue of this period of stocktaking may be that it provides an incentive to work out a more discriminating use of earlier critical theories, which attempts to address the relation between specialized research and public activity, especially between difficult theoretical discourses and discourses that solicit the interest of more-general audiences without speaking down to them. Indeed, the challenge of these times may be to question the categories I have just employed, to seek the theoretical dimensions of ordinary understanding, and to link it more compellingly to the specialized discourses of theory. Such an ambition would not revolutionize the world, but it might be one element in connecting academic work with what is valuable in the practice of the public intellectual.

The category of intellectual should not be reified or confined to a discrete group. For Marx, the central mode of alienation was between mental and manual labor, and his ideal society would probably not include a separate category or group of intellectuals. But the important consideration is the critical intellectual function, involving crucial elements of contestation and carnivalization. This is the function I would defend as valuable ethically and politically in any society, even one that significantly generalized the intellectual function and overcame certain forms of specialization and the division of labor.

DOMINICK LACAPRA
Cornell University

The question of whether academics are or should be intellectuals can be translated into the question of academics' proper public role. How public should they be? Public in which of the word's many senses? The answer to these questions depends on how the crisis of the humanities is understood. This crisis is so widely acknowledged that it's easy to miss important differences in the various accounts of the common unhappiness and thus in the measures proposed to address it.

I will distinguish schematically between two diagnoses. For the first, the humanities are besieged by instrumental rationality, exemplified equally by capitalist profitability and by technoscience. For the second, the attack on the humanities belongs to capitalism's attack on the social welfare state in general. Thus it is the social welfare state, not the uniqueness of the humanities, that intellectuals should defend.

Books like John Guillory's *Cultural Capital* and Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins* exemplify the first diagnosis. In asking intellectuals to confront the anti-humanist malevolence of instrumental rationality, neither

book allows for significant distinctions among (say) the capitalist bottom line, a technocratic or bureaucratic style of governance, and a scientific epistemology. Now, these may all be connected on some level, but it's a serious mistake to conflate them into a single monstrous technoscientific enemy that defines the humanities negatively, as it were. The profit motive does not target culture and creativity. Often it works through them; otherwise there would be no reason for the usual complaints about the power of advertising. Nor has the aesthetic lost out in some apocalyptic new way to science or technology. The same budgetary thinking that makes it hard to publish critical works on single authors has also been cutting into the possibility of long-term scientific research. (The capitalist bottom line should be broken down into short-term and long-term profitability; the latter, for all its sins, is by no means necessarily opposed to the purposes of science or of the humanities.) Hence the sciences too have problems of legitimation as well as of funding. As Dorothy Nelkin wrote recently, the glee with which scientists responded to Alan Sokal's hoax on *Social Text* can only be explained if one considers that, with the large federal cutbacks in defense-related research after the cold war and with a visible increase in directly profit-oriented corporate control over science, fewer people are willing to believe in the disinterestedness of scientists, who are feeling the heat ("What Are the Science Wars Really About?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* 26 July 1996: A52).

The most urgent components of the crisis in the humanities are the collapse of the job market (the loss of tenure-track jobs for graduate students) and, in part for that reason, a sense of internal inequality within the university (too many non-tenure-track jobs for graduate students, adjuncts, and part-timers and hence an increasing gulf between them and securely tenured faculty members). Thus, as Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson write in their introduction to *Higher Education in Crisis*, the breakdown of the "apprenticeship model" has removed the "moral foundation" of the profession, the reasonable hope that students would enter into positions like those of their teachers. By this reading, the causes of the crisis are less civilizational than political. In part because of funding reductions and in part out of a decision to imitate the ruthlessness of for-profit corporations, universities are cutting budgets, subcontracting, busting unions, decreasing their employees' security and benefits, and cultivating a "flexible" labor force for which they can take minimum responsibility. The rest follows.

This diagnosis overlaps with the other, of course, but there is one overwhelming difference: while the account of the capitalist attack on the social welfare state addresses the humanities, it is not based on a notion of their

distinctness or identity. Thus it does not call forth a sort of humanistic identity politics, in which intellectuals organize to defend the interests and identities they share as intellectuals. Whatever paranoia tenured faculty members in the humanities feel toward their slightly more protected colleagues in other schools or departments—it's true of course that scientists teach less and are paid more—the undermining of public support for social services is a cause that the humanities share with a great many other people inside and outside the university, intellectuals and nonintellectuals. And it is one in which hostility to scientists and even technocrats is needlessly divisive and unproductive. Their cooperation is necessary, and there's no good reason humanists should not seek it.

Arnold- and Leavis-style arguments about the putative opposition of "two cultures" would put neighbors in the position of squabbling over scraps. Surely it is better for neighbors to join together and demand something more than scraps for everyone. In the struggle for society's long-term interests, which include scientific research as well as humanistic education, however defined, the proper line of defense for intellectuals is not the autonomy of the aesthetic or the value of the canon, whether traditional or revised. It's the transgenerational continuities of the public welfare, based on a notion of the public that must be associated, for the present, at least, with the social welfare state.

BRUCE ROBBINS
Rutgers University, New Brunswick

David R. Shumway concludes his essay "The Star System in Literary Studies" with an admonition: "We in literary studies can only begin to regain public confidence in the knowledge we produce if we are willing to claim an authority for our work wider than that vested in the stars" (*PMLA* 112 [1997]: 98). I fear that this change will only happen the hard way. And the fault will be in ourselves, not in our stars.

Being an intellectual was once a craft; at the close of the twentieth century, being an intellectual first became a profession, and now it has become an industry, albeit a star-studded one. In the modern languages, there is said to be an "oversupply" of PhDs, and the "job market" is considered the principal problem of the profession (a view I—a currently underemployed 1996 PhD with a dissertation on twentieth-century poetry in traditional forms—don't directly dispute). In the next century, I expect the academy and the production, ranking, placement, and careers of intellectuals in it (there are few elsewhere) to get the Rust Belt treatment: after corporatization and outsourcing will come deregulation, the closing of locals by

discount chains, and finally the separation of consumers from suppliers by high-tech speculators analogous to the bandits who make daily raids on NASDAQ from offices in suburban malls to the discomfiture of residual big-name "market maker" institutions.

It will not be the democratization but the leveling of higher education. The project for those who will be the intellectuals in this world will be to be intellectuals at all, to have some integrity rather than be pawns in the latest con game seeking to exploit the margins more efficiently. Intellectuals are already commodities. As always (at least since Gorgias), the question is how to avoid selling out.

One step in the right direction is to take a step back from the exploitation of nonparity intellectual labor. The full-time tenured and tenure-track professionals must take the case for their less established colleagues to the public, along with the broader case for the value of intellectual work, the inseparability of advanced scholarship and the teaching of college students. In 1996 the MLA Delegate Assembly passed without notable opposition a resolution by the Graduate Student Caucus expressing the association's intention to "take the lead in working with other disciplinary and higher-education groups in encouraging legislative and policy bodies at the national or state level to adopt and fund initiatives which would provide for labor equity in graduate-employee and adjunct work, and provide incentives for higher-education institutions to begin reductions in their reliance upon adjunct labor." If the resolution is ratified (and merely having the entire membership read it will be a significant event), the character of the MLA and perhaps of other scholarly and intellectual associations as advocates for their own interests and for their value to society will begin to change importantly. I hope all members join in advancing this change, each according to ability.

Taking the case for intellectual labor to the public, however, requires more than insisting that seventy-five percent of staff members be full-time instructors. (The resolution suggests this figure.) In an address to the Forum on the Job Market and the Future of the Profession at the 1996 MLA convention, John Guillory implicitly urged that we humanities scholars and educators make common cause with equally threatened scientific researcher-teachers in higher education. He implied that we should suspend our fractious political agendas, at least temporarily, in favor of a kind of class-consciousness-raising. But this still would not be enough. We must, I believe, make our case on at least three grounds. We must indeed forcefully assert the worth of what Guillory and Shumway would call "the knowledge we produce." And we must advance our ethical agenda as well—that the unconsensual plenum of

our internal disagreements is of intrinsic and general interest to society. Moreover, we must recapitulate the unique claims of aesthetic education and the cultivation of taste, making common cause with creative writers and artists, who are as threatened as or more threatened than laser physicists and literary theorists. The National Endowment for the Arts got hit as hard and fast as the National Endowment for the Humanities.

During the next century, as more and more people need to be more and more educated, there is a danger that we may all speak only for ourselves. If we speak out now collectively as much as individually, we may not have to end up making Internet infomercials in cutthroat competition for subsistence teaching contracts at nonaccredited schools or "multilevel-marketing" our scholarship on low-budget, zero-royalty vanity compact discs. Instead we will be dispersing the ideas, sensibilities, and purposes that will help give the denizens of the information universe not only a human face but also a human mind and heart.

JOSEPH O. AIMONE
University of California, Davis

When I entered college in 1960, I knew what an intellectual was: someone like Einstein or Sartre who spent every day in lab or library thinking deep new thoughts. My students today are not so certain who an intellectual is, although Bill Gates and Woody Allen come out high on their lists. Intellectuals are seen to do all sorts of things these days, including writing advice columns in the Sunday papers.

During the past half century, American society invested unprecedented cash and hopes providing intellectuals a network of verdant institutions in which they could pursue, with relative freedom and ease, self-defined interests in the company of beautiful young people. It was a great life; history offers no better. However, a talk with the instructors, lecturers, part-timers, and TAs who are being hired by the academy in increasing numbers or with legislators, regents, or taxpayers reveals a hard truth: it's over. In the twenty-first century, a dwindling number of tenured professors and their less numerous replacements will preside over universities stingy with opportunities for independent study. Most intellectuals will be out on the street, once again grubbing for a living in the marketplace. Some, like Gates and Allen (if they count as intellectuals), will do extraordinarily well, and many will do just fine. Whether the university's loss will be society's gain depends on these successes. As the patina of the academy is flaked by the acid rain of a pragmatic society, intellectuals will head increasingly for Wall Street, the Beltway, Silicon Valley, and Hollywood. If they were

taught well as children and students, they will wish to improve society, just as academic intellectuals do today. They will control unprecedented resources, so their opportunities will be great.

The intellectuals of the twenty-first century are being taught by the intellectuals of today. Here is what I hope the instruction includes: (1) How to get along in an environment where technology offers instant global charisma to local voices. When voices can no longer be screened, learning how to listen to others becomes imperative. (2) How to build reflection into the daily operating routines of complex organizations. Summer vacation will not survive in the new millennium. (3) How to prize children. To turn away from children is to turn away from humanity. (4) How to get help. There will always be new tools, methods, and data; access to them will come through other people. (5) How to use our discipline as a means instead of canonizing our habits. Rational processes should facilitate movement toward goals. Fetishized, they paralyze.

For educators in literature and language, the task is to teach the intellectuals of the twenty-first century how to love and respect words, their own as well as others'. Students should understand and apply to their expression the lesson of care for discourse and audience that the literary discipline teaches. Reading, writing, and research will be as important as anything twenty-first-century intellectuals will be called on to learn, and they will not have as much time as academics today did to get it right.

Writing about the future or about utopia is writing about the here and now. Sometimes the here and now distresses me, as when I read an issue of *PMLA* on teaching in which the student is hidden behind a screen of elaborate professorial self-consciousness. If students are not asked what they want, why they want it, and how teachers can help them achieve it, they are left to their own devices and those of a frantic culture. When I observe this result, I am pessimistic about the place of the intellectual in the twenty-first century. As the academic golden age gives way to dross, it is possible that I and my peers will not be able to afford to retire, and thus we will be the intellectuals of the twenty-first century. But then I listen to Lyle Lovett; if country music can take a thoughtful turn, perhaps the intellectual future is better than those in the beleaguered ivory tower can imagine.

BRYAN C. SHORT
Northern Arizona University

Intellectual is not a word that readily springs to my mind or lips these days. The word has become a bit moldy. This degradation has no doubt been overdetermined. One important factor is surely the globalization of intellectual

life (as well as other forms of human life), brought about by rapid travel all over the world, the internationalization of economies, the decline of the nation-state, and new communications technologies.

The old idea of the intellectual accompanied the culture of the book, newspaper, and journal that began in its modern form in Europe in the early eighteenth century and reached its heyday in the Romantic period and thereafter. This traditional concept of the intellectual, closely tied to nationalisms and to linguistic essentialisms, is exemplified by Coleridge in England and by the circles around Kleist and the Schlegel brothers in what was not yet a nationally unified Germany. These figures used periodicals and books to promulgate social and literary ideas. The followers of Kleist and the Schlegels gathered in salons to exchange ideas, as in Friedrich Schlegel's imaginary salon conversation "Gespräch über die Poesie" ("Dialogue on Poetry"), 1799–1800, *Kritische Schriften* [Munich: Hanser, 1964] 473–529).

That tradition remained a living ideal in Europe and America until after World War II. An intellectual was a distinguished specialist in some field—poetry, literary criticism, art or music criticism, history, political science, or even physics or biology—who also wrote for a broad educated public that shared a common culture. A certain mode of the essay was the intellectual's prime expressive medium. When Georg Lukács was only twenty-five, in 1910, he wrote an essay that identifies the role of this genre ("On the Nature and Form of the Essay," *Soul and Form*, trans. Anna Bostock [Cambridge: MIT P, 1974] 1–18). Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno would be examples of such intellectuals in pre-World War II Germany, as would G. B. Shaw and W. H. Auden in England, Paul Valéry and Jean-Paul Sartre in France, and Lionel Trilling, Edmund Wilson, and Hannah Arendt in the United States.

This tradition is severely etiolated or even dead now. All the factors that sustained it are vanishing, at least in the United States. There is no longer a common culture in the United States, or it is recognized that there never was one. Nor are there central cities that can play the role Berlin, Dresden, and Jena did for the German Romantics, London and Paris did for nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century England and France, or New York did for the early-twentieth-century United States. Capitals today, like Oslo, sufficiently unified and small that representative artists, writers, professors, journalists, and politicians might meet at the same party or reception do not have international cultural influence.

It is not that journals in the United States have all become politicized. They have always been political. No one, however, confidently expects to find in the *New*

York Review of Books or the *New Yorker* essays of the caliber of Benjamin's or Arendt's, nor do such periodicals represent the views of more than a small segment of the educated class. From an outsider's perspective they often seem as much anti-intellectual as intellectual. No large, highly educated public with common interests and goals exists in the United States. If Bill Clinton had quoted a great American poet during the last presidential campaign—Walt Whitman, say—he might not have been elected. To a considerable degree universities have lost their social role as advisers and shapers of opinion for the government and the public. Scholars now commonly have more solidarity with international groups interested in their specialities than they do with any national constituencies or even with their own local university communities. Talk show experts, even on public radio, are as likely to be drawn from conservative think tanks as from universities.

The most drastic force putting an end to the old tradition of the intellectual is the popular visual and aural culture of radio, television, cinema, videos, CDs, CD-ROMs, and the World Wide Web, which has replaced print culture as the crucible of public opinion, of the ethos and values of citizens in the West. This popular culture is creating what Jon Katz, in a recent provocative essay, calls the "netizens" of the new "digital nation" ("The Netizen: Birth of a Digital Nation," *Wired* Apr. 1997: 49+, online, World Wide Web, available <http://www.wired.com/5.04/netizen/>). As he explains, netizens disdain those who lecture them about the shallowness of mass-marketed music, cinema, and so on. "The digital young . . ." says Katz, "share a passion for popular culture—perhaps their most common shared value, and the one most misperceived and mishandled by politicians and journalists. On Monday mornings when they saunter into work, they are much more likely to be talking about the movies they saw over the weekend than about Washington's issue of the week [or, I might add, about what a wonderful poem *Paradise Lost* is]. Music, movies, magazines, some television shows, and some books are elementally important to them—not merely forms of entertainment but means of identity" (184). Poems and novels used to be means of identity; now it is the latest rap group. Media culture, disseminated globally, has the power to drown out the quiet voice of the fading book culture and also to blur the specificities of local and national societies, just as people everywhere wear blue jeans and carry Walkmen. The old ideal of the intellectual will be replaced by a netizen figure whose profile is as yet but dimly discernible.

J. HILLIS MILLER

University of California, Irvine

The human brain does not seem quite of a piece. Wonderously complex, the brain boggles itself. Adapting through aeons to one kind of environment, it has created another in the last few minutes of evolution. Any detailed diagram of it looks like a demented Rube Goldberg contraption, still incomplete. And this is the organ intellectuals, like all human beings, live by? Mind has its malice and needs, and it merits cordial skepticism where intellectuals are concerned. Still, some scientists speculate that information may be as intrinsic to the universe as matter or energy, time or space. In that case, could life's gnostics claim a special destiny? Could intellectuals, adepts of sentience, play a key role in helping reality become conscious of itself? Beyond the personal, beyond the social, the mandate of mind may be inherent to existence.

These are questions that humanists believe are best left to the Santa Fe Institute. A pity! Works like Roger Penrose's *The Emperor's New Mind* (1989), Robert Wright's *The Moral Animal* (1994), and George Johnson's *Fire in the Mind* (1995) could let fresh air in on stale academic debates. But in academe, cultural fashions, not paradigms of knowledge, reign. The Standard Model of the humanities—materialist theories, cultural determinism, oppositional critiques, identity politics, ideologies of difference, fictions of power, and so on—permits few deviations. Could some awareness of emergent syntheses in new cosmologies, chaos and complexity theories, subatomic physics, artificial intelligence, evolutionary psychology, molecular biology, brain research, as well as in cultural and postcolonial studies, help to bring the Standard Model into the twentieth century, before the twenty-first crashes down?

Whatever its virtues in the past, the Standard Model now cramps academic intellectuals, crimps everyone's mind. In promoting sectarianism, the model favors self-concern. In privileging opposition, it locks academics into a reactive stance. And in giving politics priority, it turns them into propagandists, elevating lying into a universal principle, as Kafka would say.

Who, then, are the "true" intellectuals? I have a dream:

They do not lie, especially to themselves, which is one definition of courage.

They are alive to the full power and mystery of art. They have broad commitments, to humanity, to life on earth and beyond.

They cultivate altruism, self-heedlessness, which is courage of another kind.

In all this lurk a spiritual motive and an ecological civility of mind that, as Seamus Heaney put it, tilt "the scales of reality towards some transcendent equilibrium."

Such a dream, alas, excludes too many artists, thinkers, scientists—mortals with gristle, marrow, phlegm, bile. Who would qualify besides, say, Beckett? A million Diogenes could roam the cultural capitals of the world, lamps blazing in the noonday sun, in vain. Still, I resist the bullying choice between postmodern concerns and the language of spirit. In an age of immanent data, intellectuals must challenge themselves to rethink the relations between fact and value, information and imagination, knowledge and spirit. Sublunary as their work may seem, it engages something I want still to call spirit, as it did when warlocks, shamans, Egyptian scribes, and Babylonian priests served as custodians of sacred knowledge. Orthodox theologies fail to convey the semantic energy of the word *spirit*, an energy that perfuses cultures high and low, as Mircea Eliade has voluminously shown, and that attests to a luxuriance of improbable hope. Improbable? "Is it not sheer dogmatic folly," William James asks in *The Will to Believe* (1897), "to say that our inner interests can have no real connection with the forces that the hidden world may contain?"

From telephone and telegraph through television and satellite to laser and supercomputer, new technologies have contributed to a vast, invisible process of derealization, ephemeralization, etherealization in which matter is turned into energy and energy into codes—a phenomenon of message scattering, semiotic dispersal, and cognitive dissemination that Marshall McLuhan and Buckminster Fuller foresaw and that I once called the "new gnosticism." This noetic process has now reached into the roots of life, as cloning intervenes in the languages of DNA. Is it any wonder that *Time* slyly, smarmily speaks of "finding God on the Web"?

The unctuousness of New Age beatitudes is not the point. Present and future technologies may radically disturb epistemic distinctions between self and other, male and female, mind and matter, fact and fiction, randomness and order, nature and artifice, artifice and mystery, distinctions that have long underwritten individuals and societies in the West. Such drastic shifts in the sense of self and world do not simply require novel epistemologies; they may also excite new feelings of ignorance and wonder akin—akin only—to myths or cosmologies of old. How else "understand," for instance, Fred Hoyle's statement that the probability of molecules assembling the first complex living cell is like that of a tornado assembling a Boeing 747 from a junkyard? Thus, I hazard, whatever shape intellectuals assume in decades to come, their thought will touch the edge of impossibility, a kind of lucid unknowing or unlearning, a deeper *agnosticism* verging on the sacred. Meanwhile, intellectuals have worked enough to meditate and mediate the implacable claims of

the local and global in geopolitics, work enough to witness not the end of history but its inexorable rebirths.

IHAB HASSAN
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

By *intellectuals* I mean those who have been singled out by their contribution to the articulation of the imaginary of a community, from the anonymous *tlatamini* in ancient Mexico and Guaman Poma in colonial Peru to Martin Heidegger in postwar Germany, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Rigoberta Menchú, from José Ortega y Gasset to Gloria Anzaldúa, from Abdelkebir Khatibi to Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. By *indigenous intellectuals* I refer in the context of the Americas to thinkers who articulate their thoughts in Amerindian languages (e.g., Nahuatl, some of the thirty languages of Maya roots, Aymara, Quechua—to name some with larger numbers of speakers) or at the intersection of Amerindian and colonial languages (chiefly Spanish and English). Certainly, an indigenous intellectual is also a national one, as a *yatiri* in Bolivia today is. A national intellectual could also be considered native national or nationalized, in the order established by the nation-state. These distinctions are consequences of the colonial histories of geohistorical configurations such as the Americas and the Caribbean, to which the colonial languages (Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, German), defined in Europe, were exported at the same time that the *letrado*, or “man of letters,” was defined. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the idea of the intellectual began to replace that of the man of letters once the organization of knowledge based on logic, rhetoric, and grammar (the trivium) was superseded by a preference for the idea. As Locke puts it, words signify nothing immediately but the ideas in the mind of the speaker (*An Essay concerning Human Understanding* [New York: Dover, 1959] 3.1).

The situations in Latin America I have in mind can be introduced with this question, for example: Is Rigoberta Menchú a Maya-Quiché or Guatemalan intellectual? When Burgos Debray recorded and published *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman from Guatemala* (a literal translation of the Spanish title is “My Name Is Rigoberta Menchú . . . and Here Is How My Consciousness Was Born”), Menchú had only recently learned Spanish. Her written Spanish and knowledge of Latin American history and literature were certainly minimal, if they existed at all. Being illiterate (in the most canonical sense), as well as being a woman, would have disqualified her from consideration as an intellectual. But as those who have read Angel Rama's *The Lettered City* know (Durham: Duke UP, 1982), literacy in Latin America since the sixteenth

century was a tool of colonial control. A definition that says that those who are not literate are not intellectuals no matter how well they think makes reading and writing at least as important as thinking. But every community needs certain thinkers—literate or not—whose role is to educate, to keep the memory of the community, to tell narratives through which the community identifies itself. In the sixteenth century, Spaniards called those in this role men of letters, and Aymara, Quechua, and Nahuatl speakers named those in similar roles *amauta* and *yatiri* and *tlatamini*.

If we decide to call the holders of these roles intellectuals, let's use adjectives linked to local histories and speak, for example, of European intellectuals, Chinese intellectuals, indigenous intellectuals, Aymara intellectuals. The adjective underlines singularities that contest the idea of a universal model of the intellectual in relation to which all other possibilities are defined, measured, and subalternized. I want to avoid positing *intellectual* as an empty signifier whose chief function is to maintain the “universal” under the disguise of the “particular.”

Since the 1970s indigenous intellectuals in Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia have been gaining notice by practicing a double discourse that I call border gnosis (i.e., thinking between languages, as Menchú, Arguedas, and Anzaldúa did), an intellectual perspective that grows out of colonial legacies and experiences. Let me give you an example. Roberto Choque is a historian and an intellectual of Aymara descent who works on the history of education in Bolivia from the Aymara perspective. One of his books, *Educación indígena: Ciudadanía o colonización* (1993), was published by a La Paz house called Ediciones Aruwiyiri. *Aruwiyiri*, an expression combining Spanish and Aymara words, could be translated as “one who burns or spreads fire with the voice.” This press explains in each of its books that it “intends to reconstitute this word in order to make clear the incorporation of the written word in the ancestral wisdom of our communities.” Double discourse and border gnosis: the formula is no longer oral versus written or Spanish versus Aymara but all of them at the same time. Differences are not erased in a happy syncretism but are allowed to bring new possibilities for thinking and for carving the space for a postoccidental intellectual able to think at the intersection of the colonial languages of scholarship and the myriad languages subalternized and banned from cultures of scholarship through five hundred years of colonialism.

In 1990 the anthropologist Joanne Rappaport looked at Colombian history from the perspective of the indigenous intellectuals Don Juan Tama y Calambás, Manuel Quintín Lame, and Julio Niquinás. After a detailed study of the intellectual lives of these three men, Rappaport in-

quires about the relevance of one of her cases to “the analysis of image, narrative, and text, the study of literacy and the usefulness of distinguishing myth from history” (*The Politics of Memory: Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes*, 1990 [Durham; Duke UP, 1997] 179). This question, asked in the context of the struggle for the invention of memory in a modern and “Third World” nation-state, interrogates the role of the indigenous public intellectuals in Colombia. I emphasize “public” because the matter no longer concerns the “organic intellectual” of an “autonomous” and isolated indigenous community. It involves a border gnosis, in which the indigenous intellectual utters the memory of the nation in Spanish and in native languages. The double discourse is a conflictual dialogue with the hegemony of the state, with the principle that the national history is written in Spanish by Spanish-speaking intellectuals.

I suspect that the twenty-first century will be the scene of the postoccidental, not postcolonial, intellectual. Intellectuals will no longer be able to describe the colonial experience through the universal critical theories of modernity or in the colonial languages of past scholarship.

Instead, they will create a border epistemology that will foreground not just as information but as thinking energy the intellectual practices that the Enlightenment suppressed when its expansionist logic claimed that the only sustainable knowledge was conceived by its own intellectuals. This logic made knowledge portable, and the native elites to whom it was exported were convinced that their intellectual production was inferior to modern reason. Between both worlds, the indigenous intellectuals are emerging. The task of postoccidental intellectuals will be to think from the double legacies of colonialism and modernity, from what expanded and what was suppressed. These thinkers are already contributing to significant changes in universities (Luis Enrique Lopez, “Emerging Demands concerning Bilingual Intercultural Education in the Andes: A Challenge to Latin American University Tradition and Culture,” unpublished ms., 1997) and will continue to contribute to a planetary civilization beyond the global designs of the “mission civilisatrice.”

WALTER D. MIGNOLO
Duke University