

Can liberal education survive liberal democracy?

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I WOULD like to begin with an oath to the goddess Hera. My warrant for such an unorthodox beginning comes from Socrates, who swore “by Hera” when he was involved in speeches about the betterment of the young. The uttering of such an oath was almost as unorthodox for him as it is for me, though for different reasons. In the Greek world, “by Hera” was a woman’s oath, Hera being the goddess who superintended childbirth and childrearing. The oath was taken up by Socrates—never one to scorn the wisdom of women and never one to stand upon convention. The oath was used by him to indicate his preference for private, philosophic education as against civic education.

The most telling instance is in the *Apology*, when Socrates interrogates his accuser Meletus. Having been charged with corrupting the young, Socrates asks Meletus: “Who, then, makes

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the young better?" Meletus says, "all the Athenians" make the young better—all, that is, except the corrupter Socrates. Socrates tests this answer by comparing the human situation to that of horses. He says it is undeniable that it is "the one"—skilled in horsemanship—who improves horses, and certainly not the unknowing many. However, Socrates' antidemocratic argument in favor of the expert educator might be thought just a tad tendentious. Socrates points to the problem himself when he says that his argument holds not only for horses but for "all the other animals." Let's try asking the question again about a different species. Who makes otters better? Or who makes leopards better? Meletus's likely response—"all the other otters," "all the other leopards"—is not a bad answer. Even with respect to horses, the soundness of Meletus's answer depends on whether one is speaking of wild or domesticated horses. In their natural state, isn't it "all the horses" who make the baby horses better? The young are socialized into the ways of the group; they are naturally acculturated. This is Meletus's understanding of the process of education in democracy. Growing up *in* the democracy educates *for* democracy. Environed by the laws, and by fellow citizens obedient to the laws, the young are made better. Meletus assumes that law is natural, and in particular that democratic law is natural.

Socrates embraces a different educational model: the thoroughbred horse, which is bettered by contact with, and subordination to, the knowing members of a higher species. What a brilliant metaphor Plato has given us. A horse is one of the very few creatures with two possible modes of existence. Leaving aside the question of which of these modes is truly better for a horse, what about man? Are we also beings with two modes of existence? Are we better off wild or domesticated? And what do those terms mean as applied to us? If Meletus is right, then living within the horizon of political law is, paradoxically perhaps, a dictate of our wild nature or at least our untutored nature. We are beings who are naturally conventional. If Socrates is right, then the fulfillment of our nature requires a different sort of culture. What higher things or higher being might human beings be understood as in the service of? If horses need human trainers in order to achieve their domestication and be thorough-bred, then what do hu-

mans need for their high-toning? The concept of domestication as applied to man would seem to point toward the divine. And indeed, throughout the *Apology*, Socrates stresses the divine guidance that led him to the philosophic life.

It makes sense that the other, even stranger oath, employed by Socrates is “by the dog.” Whereas “by Hera” was a Greek woman’s oath, “by the dog” is not a Greek oath at all. It is a Socratic neologism. But it is a fine oath for someone who believes it possible to live in company with what is higher than oneself. The dog, even more than the horse, is a being who has switched his allegiance from his pack-fellows to man. No man is a hero to his valet, but every man is a god to his dog. Only half in jest, I would say that among the brute creation, the dog alone has a theistic sensibility (and it is thus entirely appropriate that “dog” is an anagram of “god”). In swearing “by the dog,” Socrates lets us know that he defines man not as a political animal, but as a companion animal to the divine.

Ancients vs. moderns

Since the Enlightenment, the Athenian experience of the opposition between civic education and divine philosophizing has been forgotten. Moreover, the forgetting was deliberately induced by modern philosophers like John Locke. Locke was a great advocate of home schooling. In his educational treatise, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, he recommends that children be kept as much as possible in the company of their parents. Parents might employ a tutor but ought not to send children away to school. At a stroke, Locke puts an end to the ancient contest between the city and the philosopher. His radical privatization of education seems to dispense with both civic and liberal education. The education of boys is now to be modeled on that traditionally accorded to girls—a useful education directed toward domestic and economic objects.

Although Locke’s preference for what he calls “breeding at home” may look like a rejection of civic education, the result may, in fact, simply be a new sort of civic education for a new sort of civic order. A Lockean regime, sustained by the twin institutions of family and property and devoting itself to peace and prosperity, would not need the communal and martial

measures so characteristic of ancient civic education. The more limited degrees of patriotism and citizenship associated with limited government might well be achieved without public sponsorship.

By resituating democratic socialization around the hearth, what Locke has likely done is silence Socrates. In Athens, Socrates could always chat with promising youngsters by visiting the schools (as he does, for instance, in the dialogue entitled *Lovers*). Locke, however, would do away with these public venues where children are likely to encounter questionable influences. Locke himself nowhere refers to the danger posed by Socrates. He points, instead, to the "contagion of rudeness and vice" inevitable whenever and wherever youngsters are collected together. In schools, the tone is rarely set by the grown-ups, who are after all, like prison guards, vastly outnumbered. Youth culture predominates; and youth culture can never be a force for true culture. Visit any large educational facility—you'll see that, at most, teachers can create scattered islands of civilization, an archipelago amidst the expansive sea of uncouth energy. In his day, Locke complained of "that malapertness, tricking, or violence learned amongst schoolboys." We can easily tick off an updated list of the bad habits and vices that students acquire through peer pressure. Parents could certainly rest more secure if their children were insulated from both the world of other teens and the pied-piper pedagogues, who range from the criminal pedophile to the would-be Socrates who has your daughter believing she was born for poetry, when you are certain that her love of language destines her for the more lucrative profession of law.

Locke's recommendation of home-based education thus contributes to security: the goal of the modern commercial republic. Unlike Socratic private education, Locke's version is strikingly nonphilosophic, directed not toward contemplation and questioning but toward a more reliable transmission of family values, including the family property. Utility is the watchword of a Lockean education.

The American solution

For a variety of reasons, Americans (despite being pretty good Lockceans) decided they could not do without public

schools. The task of teaching, however, was taken up by an unexpected set of preceptors. For the first time in history, women entered a learned profession. Under the guidance of a schoolmarm, the coeducational American schoolhouse breathed a very different spirit than the all-male world of ancient or aristocratic schooling. Public education in America began as an extension of the home, rather than a dramatic separation from it. After all, one went not to a school but to a schoolhouse, there to be taught by a woman reminiscent of an older sister or an aunt. Indeed, when my mother first started teaching in the mid 1950s, two of the ten students in her one-room schoolhouse were her younger siblings.

In this way, American education accomplished a blending of the domestic and political realms. American women assumed civic responsibilities that women had never had in the past, at the same time that American schools acquired an altogether new familial foundation. Over time, however, the compound has broken down. My mother was the last to teach in that one-room Iowa schoolhouse. Consolidation led to larger schools, more bureaucratization, and the loss of local control, as schools became agents of the state. The opening of other professions to women meant that teaching was no longer guaranteed to draw the very best. And, of course, female entry into the larger workforce in conjunction with the sexual revolution had far-reaching effects on the family itself. Locke's fears about "the contagion of rudeness and vice" have been amply borne out in contemporary America, as young people are increasingly left to shift for themselves. The decline of the family has been such that one now sees public service announcements reminding parents that they need to be the main influence in their kids' lives.

Of late, more attentive parents have taken the dramatic step of returning to Locke's original recommendation of homeschooling. It strikes me that this phenomenon should not be understood as a rejection of the principles of American civic education. Quite the reverse: It is instead a way of recalling those principles. It constitutes a salutary revival of the uniquely American, homespun form of civic education. Since public schools in America never had extensive civic functions—not at least as compared to the ancient world—once they start to fail

at even those minimal tasks, it makes eminent sense to return to the mode of schooling that was believed to be most appropriate by one of the founders of the modern republic. Home-schooling today is not some sort of “militia movement for moms”—a radical withdrawal of the disaffected—but rather a first step toward the reconstitution of civil society. It’s fascinating to observe how home-schoolers are now pooling their resources. When a handful of home-schools get together, they in effect recreate the little red brick schoolhouse.

The crisis in liberal education

Despite all the problems, I’m guardedly optimistic that basic education is on the upswing (whether conducted in home schools, charter schools, parochial schools, private schools, or public schools). We are too practical a people to allow practical education to deteriorate beyond a certain point. But what of liberal education? We know its status was perilous in the ancient republics. In defense of our modern republic, one might well point with pride to the fact that we don’t kill Socrates, we tenure him. However, given Socrates’ view of those who prostitute wisdom by teaching for pay, one has to wonder whether the modern tenured professor is the heir of Socrates or the heir of the Sophists. In comparing the teacher-for-hire to the prostitute, Socrates was in complete earnest. Just as the practitioners of the world’s oldest profession make a travesty of love, professional educators do the same to the love of wisdom. Neither bodily nor philosophic eros can survive being made into a business proposition. The erotic simply cannot be trafficked in—or it immediately degrades into its opposite. Thus the erotic becomes the obscene and the pornographic, while the Socratic becomes the sophistic and casuistic. The erotic spirit of Socrates has disappeared from the modern university. All that remains is something its practitioners call “the Socratic method”—in other words, not pedagogy, just a pedagogical technique.

Perhaps I’m being too harsh in my complaint about the institutionalization of teaching. After all, although Socrates founded no school, his best student did. Plato founded the Academy, and Plato’s best student, Aristotle, founded the Ly-

ceum. For centuries thereafter, liberal learning took place within the colonnade of classical philosophy. The faults of institutionalization became acute only after the seismic shift of modernity altered the foundations and structure of the enterprise. Although we still refer to “academia”—as if academic life consisted of a contemplative community of scholars—in fact the notion of seeking the truth for its own sake no longer prevails. What faculty member today would respond as Euclid did when asked by a new student, “But what shall I get by learning these things?” Euclid called his boy and said: ‘Give him three cents, since he insists on making a profit out of what he learns.’” Such contempt for worldly concerns would not go over well today. Instead, we hurry to demonstrate the market value of a liberal arts degree and to reassure parents that their outlay of funds is an investment from which their children can expect substantial returns. I remember a freshman telling me that she was in college so she wouldn’t have to work “at some crappy \$50,000 dollar-a-year job.” That was a brutally callow, but honest translation of the equally banal language of many college promotional brochures.

When professors have so little conviction about their calling, there is no internal bulwark against the legion of corrosive influences. We are all familiar with the postmodern sappers and miners who seek to deconstruct and explode the notion of truth, but just as worrisome—because more in accord with the American temper—is the rapidly advancing and expanding front of administrative troops who attempt to reduce truth to quantifiable data. These disciples of efficiency are tone-deaf to the language and aims and unique requirements of liberal learning. Under the influence of technocratic specialists, universities are restructured in imitation of corporations, with “bottom line” and “public relations” calculations coming to the fore. Small changes in nomenclature can signal this move from collegial to corporate. For instance, the lovely, venerable old title of “Provost” disappears, replaced with the ill-sounding “Academic Vice President.” In keeping with the commodification of learning, students are increasingly viewed as consumers. (Just think what the business adage “the customer is always right” will do to the teacher-student relation.) Yet another pernicious arrival from the business world is something called

“assessment.” This last, especially, betokens a loss of faith in our vocation as teachers. Learning has been replaced with “learning outcomes” that can presumably be codified and counted by various models and measures.

The best reply to this recent bureaucratic importation is contained in a remarkable document written by Eva Brann in 1991, in her capacity as Dean of St. John’s College in Annapolis. The work is entitled “Statement on Educational Policy” and contains a list of 16 founding tenets. The fourth one reads: “*We produce no assessible outcome.* The shaping of a soul is a simply immeasurable event; moreover, it is sometimes not evident until much time has passed.” Whatever one is tracking with all the survey data on retention rates, grade inflation, student satisfaction, faculty productivity, minority enrollment, and so on, it is not learning, because, as Dean Brann says, “Learning is a conversion of the soul.” Even at a Catholic college, however, it can be difficult to make arguments premised on the mysteries of soul-processes—arguments that ask only that teachers be trusted to teach and that administrators clear the way for that essential engagement between teacher and student.

I certainly do not wish to be perceived as anticapitalist. It seems to me that one can be a firm supporter of a free-market economy while still believing it imperative to insulate some facets of human life from market considerations. I would say the same about the politicization of the classroom. The larger question raised by the intrusion of economics and politics is whether an institution can stand, in a sense, outside of or above the regime. Can a community of learning operate in conformity with principles intrinsic to itself—principles quite alien, in many respects, to the surrounding democratic culture?

The answer to that question is important, since our humanity and happiness may well hinge on it. It may even be that the fate of the nation hinges on it. I have spoken at length of the difficulties that liberal education faces in a liberal democracy. I have asked whether liberal education can survive liberal democracy. But it might also be asked whether liberal democracy can survive without liberal education. Perhaps democracy is dependent on currents distinct from the democratic mainstream. To illustrate, look at how Montesquieu,

one of the most perceptive analysts of regimes, characterized monarchy. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu makes the surprising assertion that the nobility—not the king—is the essence of monarchy. The nobility is the counterweight, preventing a monarch from degenerating into a despot. It is the nobles who keep the monarchy in being. They constitute the regime, in the sense of making it a constitutional order. And so, just as rule by one can be defined in terms of the status of the few, perhaps rule by the many—at least a good form of rule by the many—requires a place of honor for the few. In popular government as well, it is the counterweights, the centrifugal forces, that are crucial.

One such counterweight would be the martial spirit—a spirit often overridden by democratic laxity, but nonetheless essential to the survival of the republic, as we have been reminded daily since September 11. In the same vein as the heroic temper would be the phenomenon of statesmanship, another activity seemingly at odds with democracy but necessary to sustain and justify it. Liberal education would be yet another counterweight that corrects and rights democracy. Paradoxically, it is by transcending the political realm that liberal education fills the office of a true friend of the regime. Liberal education keeps alive an alternative understanding of the word “liberal”—an understanding that points beyond that ordinarily associated with liberal democracy. While liberal democracy offers its citizens a liberated private realm, freed from governmental interference, liberal education explores how that free individual ought to live. It asks what are the activities and the virtues proper to the free individual. In the process, it reveals the many forms slavery can take, from the obvious bodily ones to those far subtler.

Leo Strauss, in a well-known commencement address entitled “What is Liberal Education?”, presented a number of striking formulations of the meaning of liberal education:

- Liberal education is the necessary endeavor to found an aristocracy within democratic mass society.
- Liberal education consists in reminding oneself of human excellence, of human greatness.
- Liberal education consists in listening to the conversa-

tion among the greatest minds.

- Liberal education supplies us with experience in things beautiful.

As you can tell, I have had nothing new to add. Happily, though, my own education has taught me to feel no shame in reiterating old insights. Some things need saying again and again, in every generation.

September 11

So what about the mind and morals of this millennial generation? Could it be true, as many are suggesting, that a single event has now fundamentally reshaped the national consciousness, and particularly the impressionable young? Winston Churchill, speaking of the battle of Blenheim, observed that

battles are the principal milestones in secular history.... Great battles, won or lost, change the entire course of events, create new standards of values, new moods, new atmospheres, in armies and in nations, to which all must conform.

The terrorist attack on America, however, was only a volley, and that not even the opening volley, in what may become a great battle. Of course, the resurgence of patriotism and public prayer in response to the attack has been heartening. Even more encouraging has been the ready embrace of such essential distinctions as that between civilization and barbarism, and that between good and evil—both politically incorrect distinctions long thought to have succumbed to cultural and moral relativism. Despite these wonderful signs of public-spiritedness, I'm afraid I don't believe that the immediate emotional aftermath of such an attack is reliably predictive of the future. The Athenians fell passionately in love with the campaign against Syracuse, but it didn't see them through to victory. In a prolonged contest, the quality that counts is what in a boxer or a fighting dog is called "bottom." This capacity to endure depends not on effusiveness, but on deep reserves of will. Even when elected officials display the virtues of prudence and firmness—prudence in choosing the course, firmness in pursuing it—public faith must still be marshalled. The most difficult task of democratic statesmanship is

seeing to the integrity of public opinion.

There are powerful shapers of opinion, however, over which contemporary statesmen have little control. Particularly notable in the wake of the attack have been the therapists and psychologists. At my university, for instance, the faculty were advised to consider lessening the intellectual demands on our students this semester out of consideration for the trauma they underwent. The first ribbons to be seen on campus were those sickening yellow ones, the color of public grief in America since the Iranian hostage crisis of the late 1970s—to my taste, a color too near to the white of surrender. While the stars and stripes soon began appearing around campus, yellow ribbons still encircle the trees. I think it is no surprise that the handful of peace rallies, urging against military action, have been held on college campuses—a constituency inclined toward morbid, self-indulgent sensitivities.

How nations grieve is worthy of serious reflection. If this is to be the first war of the twenty-first century, it will also be the first war fought under the superintendence of grief counselors. I am not suggesting we follow the example of the Spartan mother who upbraided the messenger when he brought her news of the loss of her sons in battle, since the only information she wanted was whether the Spartans had won. The denatured Spartan polity, where private grief had no place, rightly appalls us. Our reaction to tragedy is the exact opposite. Instead of suppressing private grief, we publicize and share it. As spectators, we seek to take a draught of the suffering of each and every victim. Think of the 58,195 individual names on the Vietnam War Memorial, or the 168 empty stone and glass chairs of the Oklahoma City Memorial, or the wall of remembrance in New York, filled with the pictures and personal effects and testimonials of the missing. It is all deeply moving, but I am not certain that it contributes to political resolve in the long run. Having recently reread Churchill's *The Second World War*, I do know that it was not the way of Londoners during the Blitz. I hope I am being unfair, and that heart-on-their-sleeve Americans will turn out to have as much inner strength as stiff-upper-lip Brits.

As the dust and ashes of the twin towers and 3,000 persons are vacuumed from the streets of New York, what have we

learned? It is said that America has had its sense of security shaken. Does that mean we have been brought face to face with our mortality, as individuals and as a nation, in ways that will deepen our existence, or only that we will now pursue the modern quest for security more completely and more obsessively? A few months back, I was leaving a hotel room at the same moment as the three youngsters next door. One of them shouted in to her parents: "Don't worry, we'll be safe." When, I wonder, did the parental injunction become "Be safe" or "Take care" rather than "Be good"?

While most young people look for the safe and the comfortable—whether in clothes, friends, sex, or classes—there are a few in rebellion against the cautious tenor of the times. The devotees of extreme sports, for instance, are intent on courting danger. It seems that when war and slavery recede from the scene, a few human beings continue to seek out, and even manufacture, occasions for dramatic self-mastery. The phenomenon of "extreme sports" is a blow for freedom, of sorts. This is what the brave do when they are born into a time of privilege and triviality. But it is also true that in extreme sports the encounter with the fear of death is purely personal, undertaken for its own sake rather than for any higher ends. Today's skydiver seeks a thrill, an adrenaline high, rather than a victory over his nation's enemies. It seems to me entirely possible that many who bungee-jump with abandon might quail when it is lead that is flying, or simply feel no inclination to become part of more regimented enterprises like armies and fire departments. It is worth noting, however, that the teenager who heroically intervened in one of the recent school shootings was an extreme sportsman. As a challenge-seeker from a very young age, he had the habit of courage.

The greater danger

After September 11, commentators were quick to declare that the younger generations, from the Boomers on down, heretofore so cosseted and fortunate, were now to be seriously tested. In implying that misfortune alone hones the spirit, the commentators, I believe, are wrong. In a certain sense, the test has become easier, by becoming so obvious. The en-

emy, although insidious and elusive, is reassuringly external once again. I once argued that the post-Cold War generations would face the tougher test: the test of maintaining the strength of liberty without the spur of fear. Whether the era of American peace and prosperity has been put on hold or not, I persist in my belief that it is harder to meet the challenge of peace and prosperity—the challenge of choosing virtue for its own sake rather than for its instrumental contribution to collective self-preservation.

Aristotle faults those regimes in which war has a sharpening effect and peace a dulling or debasing effect. He explains that when peace debilitates or corrupts a people, it is because “the legislator has not educated them to be capable of being at leisure.” Fighting for freedom when it comes under threat is, of course, necessary, but it is the enjoyment of freedom that *ought* to be ennobling. However, when the force of events caused Americans suddenly to see life under the aspect of eternity, many felt their enjoyments to be trivial rather than ennobling. That fact points to the failure of liberal education. Our spiritual incapacity cannot be addressed by encouraging Americans to get back to “normal,” as if there had been nothing at all wrong with our “normal.” Unfortunately, the embarrassment so many experienced at the sudden revelation of the tawdriness of our popular culture has rapidly subsided. The television shows are back, unchanged. Meanwhile, the man who campaigned for office with a promise to be “the education president” has now set that aspiration aside for the more urgent task of defeating terrorism. But we shouldn’t forget—and I hope he won’t either—that, according to Aristotle, to be the education president is the higher calling, and in the long run, the more imperative task.

I’m reminded of a passage from John Adams, setting forth his vision of generational possibilities:

I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy. My sons ought to study Mathematicks and Philosophy, Geography, natural History, Naval Architecture, navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry and Porcelaine.

From politics to porcelain—it’s an interesting way of formu-

lating the progress of education. One might wonder whether decorative arts like tapestry and porcelain are really superior to mathematics and philosophy. Is this just a more refined version of the descent into entertainment and triviality? In defense of Adams' ranking, I would only point out that he seems to conceive of mathematics as an applied, rather than a theoretical art. Hence, he links the study of mathematics with the study of navigation, commerce, and agriculture. So, the overall movement he envisions is from the urgent (politics and war) to the useful (mathematics and commerce) to the beautiful (the liberal arts and the fine arts). Moreover, his list expresses something essential about the beautiful: its superfluous, purely gratuitous, non-utilitarian character. It is worth remembering the context for this passage. John Adams, on a diplomatic mission to France, was writing his wife, Abigail, lamenting the press of public duties that kept him from enjoying the beauties of Paris. He reconciled himself to the sacrifice with the hope that his posterity would have more leisure, and that they would devote their leisure to worthy studies. Note that no generation is to be exempt from study—the proper use of leisure is in study. (Clearly, Adams knew his Greek: The Greek word for leisure was *schole*, from which we get school and scholar.)

What Adams perhaps leaves out, with his generational formulation, is that one may perform the urgent duties better for having had what Leo Strauss called “experience in things beautiful.” That is not the reason for studying painting, poetry, music, and architecture, but it does suggest that an appreciation of the finer things need not be debilitating or at odds with political survival. The enjoyment of liberty could fortify liberty—if, that is, the enjoyment of liberty were itself liberal rather than slavish. By humanizing man, the liberal arts provide guidance throughout the affairs of life. Adams was a better statesman for his mastery of classical language and literature; Lincoln a more sublime statesman for his love of Shakespeare and Euclid; and Churchill more Churchillian for being steeped in poetry and song. “Lots of Poetry by heart” is the educational prescription of Churchill’s memoir, *My Early Life*. Each had the “experience in things beautiful,” and it made them natural aristocrats—not just rememberers of hu-

man greatness but exemplars of it.

If these men could move between the beautiful and the useful and the urgent, perhaps we can too. David Brooks, in a much-cited article in the *Atlantic Monthly* (April 2001), dubbed today's college student "the organization kid." And he is right: They are career-minded, goal-oriented, accomplishment-driven; when you announce the due date for a paper, out come the leather-bound schedulers and electronic datebooks. These models of efficiency are now, under the compulsion of the time, reawakening to greatness and sacrifice, to history and tragedy. Perhaps this is the moment for further awakenings: If Strauss's definitions of liberal education are correct, then there is a continuum from political greatness to the conversation of great minds and the experience of things beautiful. The day after the attacks, instead of heeding my college's suggestion to turn the classroom into an hour with Oprah, my students and I pressed on with our studies. Sticking to the syllabus, on September 12 we read Pericles's "Funeral Oration" and Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" and the next week Thucydides's "Melian Dialogue" and Plato's *Apology*, finding therein resources for grief and anger transcending any the counseling centers could offer. Instead of a return to normalcy, how about if we respond to the spur of the urgent by overleaping the utilitarian in the direction of the divine?

Freedmen and free men

If you will indulge me one more quotation, I will close. This comes from W. E. B. DuBois, best known as the founder of the NAACP, but also one of America's most lyrical writers about liberal education. Composed in 1903, during a time of disfranchisement and lynchings, the passage describes Atlanta University, a freedmen's college founded in 1865, out of the rubble of civil war:

The hundred hills of Atlanta are not all crowned with factories. On one, toward the west, the setting sun throws three buildings in bold relief against the sky. The beauty of the group lies in its simple unity:—a broad lawn of green rising from the red street with mingled roses and peaches; north and south, two plain and stately halls; boldly graceful, sparingly decorated, and with one low spire. It is a restful group, one never looks for more; it is all

here, all intelligible. There I live, and there I hear from day to day the low hum of restful life. In winter's twilight, when the red sun glows, I can see the dark figures pass between the halls to the music of the night-bell. In the morning, when the sun is golden, the clang of the day-bell brings the hurry and laughter of three hundred young hearts from hall and street, and from the busy city below,—children all dark and heavy-haired, to join their clear young voices in the music of the morning sacrifice. In a half-dozen class-rooms they gather then, here to follow the love-song of Dido, here to listen to the tale of Troy divine; there to wander among the stars, there to wander among men and nations,—and elsewhere other well-worn ways of knowing this queer world. Nothing new, no time-saving devices,—simply old time-glorified methods of delving for Truth, and searching out the hidden beauties of life, and learning the good of living. The riddle of existence is the college curriculum that was laid before the Pharaohs, that was taught in the groves by Plato, that formed the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and is today laid before the freedmen's sons by Atlanta University. And this course of study will not change; its methods will grow more deft and effectual, its content richer by toil of scholar and sight of seer; but the true college will ever have one goal,—not to earn meat, but to know the end and aim of that life which meat nourishes.

DuBois knew that the movement from slavery to freedom was not achievable without liberal education. He knew it because he understood the difference between the freedman and the free man. The word "freedman" is a word rich with insight into the conditions and content of liberty. The freedman is not yet a free man, or not a free man in full. The freedman has had his chains removed by others. I think it would be fair to say that the freedman's condition is the birthright of every American. We are given, by inheritance, our unchained state. But to make of oneself a free man or woman is the work of a lifetime. It is not a work that was completed by the founding generation, or Lincoln's generation, or what has been called "the greatest generation," or that will be completed by the millennial generation. The work of fitting the mind and spirit for freedom is the work of each and every generation, and of each and every individual. To be the land of the free—in the full sense, in the sense made possible by liberal education—would be a new birth of freedom indeed.