

The War of the Three Humanisms: Irving Babbitt and the Recovery of Classical Learning

Robert C. Koons

*“Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”*

—T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from the Rock*

Irving Babbitt (1865–1933) is not much remembered today, except perhaps through Sinclair Lewis’s snarky naming of the eponymous villain of the satire of mid-American manners and mores, *Babbitt*, after the Harvard professor whose anti-Progressive views Lewis denounced in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. In fact, Irving Babbitt was far from the hidebound and fearful philistine Arthur Babbitt in Lewis’s novel. For forty years a professor of French and comparative literature at Harvard, Babbitt was the teacher and friend of T. S. Eliot and, with Paul Elmer More, the proponent of a cultural and intellectual movement, the New Humanism, that held center-stage in American intellectual life in mid-century. His first book, with the misleadingly modest title, *Literature and*

the American College,¹ is one of the ten most important and influential cultural critiques written by an American in the last century, comparable to Richard Weaver’s *Ideas have Consequences* or Russell Kirk’s *The Conservative Mind*.² In addition, Babbitt’s book is the most profound reflection on the nature of higher learning written in the last one hundred years, comparable to Newman’s *The Idea of a University*,³ or, indeed, Quintillian’s *On the Education of the Orator* or Isocrates’ *Antidosis*.

Babbitt’s genius superimposed upon the “buzzin and blurring confusion” of cultural controversies in the early twentieth century (*Literature and the American College* was published in 1908) a tripartite framework of thought that is as illuminating today as it was one hundred years ago. Babbitt begins in proper Socratic fashion with a search for a definition, in this case, of the words “humanism” and “humanist.” He discovers three distinct, and indeed profoundly antagonistic, types of humanism.

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The first, scientific humanism, is typified by Francis Bacon; the second, sentimental humanism, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau; and the third, classical humanism, by a succession of thinkers, including Plato, Cicero, Castiglione, Sidney, Goethe, Burke, Emerson, Matthew Arnold, John Henry Newman, and Babbitt himself. Babbitt recommends reserving the word “humanism” for the third tradition, preferring to use the word “humanitarianism” to refer to the first two viewpoints.

The recognition of a conflict between scientific utilitarianism and romantic and aesthetic sentimentalism is a commonplace of modern thought over the last two hundred years, verging on a cliché (as in C. P. Snow’s *The Two Cultures*). Babbitt discerns beneath this superficial opposition a deeper, unholy alliance between the two forms of humanitarianism, in a perpetual war against the very survival of humane learning and the classical tradition. Babbitt grasped a profoundly important fact, one first adumbrated in Plato’s *Republic*: to understand any cultural conflict, one must look first to the design of the curriculum. The most essential act of any culture or civilization is the education of its own children. Any profound change in the character of a civilization will, therefore, express itself most clearly in a reform of who teaches what to whom and how. All other social and political practices, whether the scope of civil liberties, the worship of gods or ideals, or the distribution of benefits and burdens, are merely the epiphenomena of the cultural ethos created by education.

The liberal arts curriculum of America’s liberal arts colleges in the nineteenth century was the fruit of twenty-five hundred years of maturation and development, beginning with the ancient schools of Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates and the Stoics, and continuing with the Romans Cicero,

Quintilian, Martianus Capella, Boethius, and Cassiodorus, revived in the early Middle Ages by Isidore of Seville and John Scotus Eriugena, and institutionalized by the anonymous founders of the European medieval universities in the twelfth century. Higher learning from late antiquity until the twentieth century was organized by the seven liberal arts as foundation—the trivium of grammar, logic, and rhetoric and the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music (including drama, poetry, and history, as well as “music” in the modern sense)—with philosophy and theology as the capstones. The goal was essentially an ethical one: the formation of the virtues of self-control and prudence. The method was the reading and emulation of a relatively fixed canon of literary classics, works that “embody the seasoned and matured experience of man, extending over a considerable time.” “By innumerable experiments, the world winnows out the more essential from the less essential.”²⁴

The ideal constitution of the ancient and medieval worlds, from Plato’s *Laws* and Aristotle’s *Politics* through Cicero’s *Commonwealth*, Polybius’s *The Histories*, and St. Thomas’s *Summa Theologica* (1–2, q. 105, a. 1), was a “mixed” constitution, an order that synthesized elements of both democracy (equality and freedom) and aristocracy (selectivity and restraint). The classical model reflected this concern for a balance, and early generations of Americans eagerly supported the liberal arts college, with its classical curriculum, as providing essential ballast to the leveling and libertine tendencies of a purely democratic society. The college was to form the country’s “natural aristocracy,” as Jefferson put it. Babbitt notes, “The final test of democracy, according to de Tocqueville, will be its power to produce and encourage the superior individual.”²⁵

However, this classical tradition faced increasing opposition throughout the nineteenth century—from the utilitarian followers of Bentham, the scientific disciples of Herbert Spencer, the pragmatic pressures of American big business and expansive national government, the quasi-scientific specialization of the German research university model, as well as the nationalistic and individualistic romanticism of Rousseau, Herder, Wordsworth, and Whitman.

The Rise of Scientific

Humanitarianism: Sir Francis Bacon

Babbitt identifies the works of Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626) as the brow from which springs the first great modern challenge to the classical synthesis: scientific humanitarianism. Bacon was not himself a scientist of any significance, but he was the first great promoter, organizer, and propagandist for Science as a perpetual institution. Bacon urged that the priorities of scientific research be revised, replacing the desire for a quasi-spiritual contemplation of the essences and intrinsic purposes of things with an unbridled quest for the acquisition of technical power over nature. Bacon urged that, through systematic experimentation Nature be “put to the rack” and forced to reveal her secrets. He recommended that any thought about the final ends or purposes of natural things (teleology) be relegated to theology; instead, men should impose their own wills upon the raw material of nature by better understanding the isolated propensities of the elements and particles making up material things. “Knowledge is power,” Bacon declaims.

Bacon served as Lord Chancellor under James I but was forced out of office and convicted of bribery. Nonetheless, his ideas remained influential, inspiring the creation of the Royal Society. As Babbitt

notes, Thomas Babington Macaulay, the British Whig politician of the mid-nineteenth century, spends the first half of his biography of Bacon on how mean a man Bacon was and the second half on how glorious the Baconian idea of scientific progress is. Babbitt argues that the moral vacuum within Bacon has exactly the same source as his ideas: “By seeking to gain dominion over things, he lost dominion over himself.”⁶

Bacon’s zeal for a single-minded pursuit of technical prowess initiated what Max Weber called “the disenchantment of the world,” including, ultimately, the disenchantment of man himself. The habit of analytic reductionism, so fruitful in physics and chemistry, was quickly transferred to the understanding of man and society, resulting in “positive” or value-free social sciences and arid philology. Once teleology was kicked out of the domain of human reason and restricted to that of faith, the scientific mind could no longer distinguish between those healthy inclinations proper to human nature and diseased or disordered impulses. Reason became, as David Hume put it, the “slave of the passions,” a mere instrument for scratching whatever itches. As a consequence, the goal of education was reduced to the acquisition of scientifically grounded technique, with the ethical dimension left to church, home, athletics, and other extracurricular activities and pastimes, or (most often) chance.

Babbitt accurately predicts the infection of the humanities themselves by physics envy. Scientism and over-specialization have taken hold within the study of literature and history:

Man himself and the product of his spirit, language and literature, are treated not as having a law of their own, but as things entirely subject to

the same methods that have won for science such triumphs over phenomenal nature.⁷

Babbitt insisted that comparative and historical studies “must be subordinated to humane standards” and “reinforced by a sense of absolute values.”⁸ In contrast, the “scientific” historian subjects man to “the law for thing.”⁹ Ironically, the triumph of “naturalism” in humane studies results in the denaturing of man, the neglect of the peculiar “law for man.” In place of the pursuit of wisdom and the elucidation of meaning, the modern “social scientist” uses quantitative methods to analyze human behavior, as though humans were no more than sacks of chemicals endlessly seeking thermodynamic equilibrium, and the modern “humanist” studies texts as mere secretions of the nervous system, products of a Darwinian struggle for power.

Writing in 1908 with remarkable foresight, before the ascendancy of pseudo-scientific fanaticism, Babbitt argues that the German educational model demonstrates that it is “easier to be scientific or erudite or enthusiastic than civilized.”¹⁰

Babbitt also notes that in Bacon we see the appearance of a *libido sciendi*, an unbridled lust for encyclopedic knowledge, in place of the classical quest for *sophia*—wisdom—conceived of as a finite, balanced, integrated and harmonious whole, attainable by individual human beings in each generation. The universal and encyclopedic knowledge sought by Bacon and his disciples (like Diderot and d’Alembert), in contrast, exceeds the capacities of any one man or any single generation. It is instead an infinite, unbounded aspiration to be carried out by a vast and immortal body of men, namely, Science (now the name of a concrete social institution, and no longer merely the abstract word for

knowledge). The educational counterpart of this infinite process of limitless progress is “science (*Wissenschaft*) as a vocation” (Max Weber): the lifelong devotion of the specialist to the contribution of some “original” research to the ever-growing treasury of knowledge, a treasury so vast as to be far beyond the comprehension of any individual. From this perspective, general education is merely a preamble to the inevitable specialization of the true intellectual, designed merely to provide the would-be specialist with those few tools of language, logic, and mathematics that are of general usefulness.

Sentimental Humanitarianism:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The second fountainhead of modernity erupts from the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), the Swiss philosopher and essayist, whose influence simply cannot be overestimated. Babbitt quotes Jules Lemaître as reporting a feeling of “sacred horror” at the extent of that influence.¹¹ As the father of modern romanticism, primitivism, sentimentalism, and aestheticism, Rousseau gives, at first glance, the impression of being the polar opposite of the pragmatic, rational, and utilitarian Bacon. Indeed, there are many instances of conflict between the two tendencies, from tensions between Victorian industrialists and the Pre-Raphaelite Arts and Crafts movement to conflict between Defense Department technocrats and folk-singing hippies over the Vietnam War. Nonetheless, the superficial tensions between the “two cultures” of scientific pragmatism and romantic individualism merely disguise their more fundamental affinities. Both are united in their rejection of the teleologically ordered cosmos of the classical tradition, with its finite and universal goal of happiness-through-self-restraint (*eudaemonia*). In its place, the moderns sub-

stitute the unbounded pursuit of infinite progress, both through the attainment of ever-greater technical power over nature (including human nature), and through the ever-novel exercise of fantasy and the idyllic imagination and the ever-freer indulgence of whim and spontaneous impulse.

Both Bacon and Rousseau were “men of weak and in some respects contemptible character.”¹² Rousseau consigned each of his five babies to the public crèche and certain death, over the desperate protests of his common-law wife. Babbitt insists that we cannot ignore these biographical facts when evaluating the philosophical movements the two men launched, since the immorality of the two founders is perfectly reflected in the amorality of their philosophies.

Babbitt is writing near the end of the term of Harvard President Charles William Eliot (president from 1869–1909). Eliot revolutionized higher education, not only at Harvard, but also throughout the country, by replacing the set curriculum with the elective system. Babbitt quotes Eliot, expressing the Rousseauist cult of individuality:

A well-instructed youth of eighteen can select for himself a better course of study than any college faculty, or any wise man. . . . Every youth of eighteen is an infinitely complex organization, the duplicate of which neither does nor ever will exist.¹³

Babbitt sardonically comments, “The wisdom of all the ages is to be as naught compared with the inclination of a sophomore.”

Eliot recognized the incongruity of condemning Rousseau the man while uncritically embracing Rousseau’s ideal of untrammelled spontaneity: Rousseau was an “execrable wretch,” yet at the same time

a glorious apostle of liberty. Eliot argued that Rousseau’s contributions to philosophy outweigh his personal flaws: “Verily to have served liberty will cover a multitude of sins.”¹⁴ Babbitt, in contrast, argued that Rousseau’s personal immorality is the key that unlocks the true meaning of his philosophy: “Instead of the still small voice that is heard in solitude and urges to self-discipline, virtue is to become a form of enthusiasm . . .”

Babbitt calls Rousseau a “moral impressionist,” one who, like the ancient sophists, sought to rest virtue “on the shifting quicksands of sensibility.”¹⁵ As Babbitt correctly noted, Rousseau’s philosophy developed from the moral sentimentalism of Hutcheson and Shaftesbury, which was carried forward by David Hume and Adam Smith.¹⁶ In the classical tradition founded by Socrates and dominant in the Western world until the eighteenth century, ethical wisdom is a form of knowledge—*nota bene* the presence of the root “science” in the word “conscience”—grounded in our exercise of reasoning intelligence. Through the proper understanding of our natural end or *telos* (the “law for man”), the practical intellect is able to judge and weigh the various and conflicting desires, feelings, and inclinations of the human heart, bringing them into a rational order, subordinated to the cosmic order reflected in human nature.

In contrast, the moral sentimentalist sees moral principle as merely the superstitious reification of human feeling, especially the feeling of pity or compassion. Ethics thus lies forever beyond the bounds of rationality and scientific understanding: a realm of “values” and not of “facts.” As Babbitt puts it, “Rousseau confounds the law for man with his own temperament.”¹⁷

The moral sentimentalists, including Hume, maintained the hope that the hard-wiring of human emotion was sufficiently

universal across the species that the fiction of a kind of “quasi-truth” in ethics could be sustained, mimicking the conclusions of classical moral wisdom. Rousseau saw that old wineskins cannot contain the new wine: morality must be reconstructed along new, sentimentalist lines, resulting in a “transvaluation of all values” (to use Nietzsche’s phrase). As Babbitt noted, the ethics of restraint, including the restraints embodied in the classical virtues of justice, wisdom, courage and temperance, is to be replaced by an ethics of enthusiasm, in which careful attention to one’s finite duties to one’s neighbor and loyalty to one’s concrete communities is supplanted by a boundless philanthropy. Babbitt correctly foresaw that such amoral humanitarianism would be catastrophic. There is a direct and unmistakable line from Rousseau’s love for humanity to the ovens of Auschwitz, the work camps of the Gulag, and the killing fields of Cambodia, all of which were justified by an irrational enthusiasm for a fantasied future.

Babbitt brilliantly diagnoses the spiritual roots of modern amorality: the Rousseauist philosophy reflects a spiritual indolence. In his letters, Rousseau himself admitted an inveterate laziness. Moral sentimentalism is the product of a kind of spiritual and intellectual sloth, the deliberate avoidance of the hard work of shaping one’s character and acquiring true wisdom and sound judgment. This spiritual acedia is compatible with a frenetic activity: “A man may be a prodigy of energy and yet spiritually indolent.”¹⁸

Eliot’s elective system is the perfect curricular embodiment of Rousseau’s philosophy, in which the student is “compelled to be free” by being denied the opportunity to undertake a coherent and well-ordered course of study. As Babbitt notes, Rousseau is essentially the resurrection of the ancient Greek Sophists. In fact, Plato, in

his *Republic*, describes Rousseau prophetically in his depiction of the democratic personality. A perfect equality rules the democratic soul: each impulse and whim claims equal right to the individual’s time and energy.

Translated into education, the result is what Babbitt calls “the democracy of studies.” The modern university is a mere cafeteria of courses, with no structure or principle of selection. Plato also predicted this outcome in his *Laws* (819A): “encyclopedic smattering and miscellaneous experiment.” As Babbitt observes, a bachelor’s degree now “means merely that a man has expended a certain number of units of intellectual energy on a list of elective studies that may range from boiler-making to Bulgarian . . . a question of intellectual volts and amperes and ohms.”¹⁹

Although the elective system promised greater autonomy for the student, in practice it has become the worst kind of tyranny. If there are no courses that students are required to take, then there are no courses that professors are required to teach. It is individual professors, not individual students, who decide what courses shall be offered. Both training and self-interest drive professors to offer narrow courses that transmit to a captive audience the results of the professors’ own specialized research. In place of the spacious vision offered by the Grand Canyon of the classical curriculum, the elective system drops students down a succession of scattered oil wells.

The academic “major,” outside of engineering and the hard sciences, deprives students of the opportunity of taking even two- or three-course sequences. Instead, students are offered a single, superficial “introduction” to the subject, followed by a random miscellany of electives, taught by academic drones who have spent their careers learning more and more about less

and less. The whole is inevitably much less than the sum of its parts.

The Common Ground of Modernity

The examination of the new college curriculum brings to light the underlying commonality between scientific and sentimental humanitarianism. In practice, both forward a course of studies that privileges the quantity of information absorbed over any selection based on natural quality. Both conceive of the college as an engine of social progress, ignoring the vitally important task of the “assimilation and perpetuation of culture.”²⁰ Both deny the existence of a natural end or *telos* of man, the conception of a finite, bounded, and balanced fulfillment of human nature, rationally intelligible and fixed. Both reduce the scope of knowledge to what can be secured by the methods of physical science, with the capacity to control and manipulate as its acid test. Both hold the wisdom of the past in contempt, replacing piety toward our forebears with a chronological narcissism and a naive faith in the fusion of scientific technique with the sentiment of humanity.

Humanitarians conceive of higher education as encompassing just two tasks: the production and distribution of knowledge. They ignore the need for rational reflection. Babbitt, echoing Montaigne, insisted that the ambition of teachers must be not “simply to distribute knowledge, not ‘to lodge it with [their students],’ but to ‘marry it to them and make it part of their very minds and souls.’”²¹ This process of reflection and assimilation requires three things that are denied to today’s students: teachers who have been selected on the basis of their breadth of learning and maturity of thought, profound texts that have stood the test of time, and the leisure of reflecting together on the same subjects over a period of years, not weeks. “The

fact that men once read the same books at college was no slight bond of fellowship.”²² According to Babbitt, we run the risk of “having our minds buried beneath a dead-weight of information which we have no inner energy, no power of reflection, to put to our own uses and convert into vital nutriment.”²³

By hollowing out the humanities, depriving them of their serious moral purpose, the humanitarian philosophy has driven students from liberal learning into an increasingly narrow credential-mongering and vocational orientation. The central disciplines of philosophy, history, and modern and classical languages once attracted the majority of college students—today, all of the humanities together make up less than a fifth. Who can blame students for pursuing the art of hotel management, when the so-called “humanities” offer no alternative more ennobling? The Baconian philosopher Herbert Spencer held art and literature to be mere “play” and logically concluded that they should occupy only the “leisure part of education.”

One thing that Babbitt did not anticipate was the rise of political correctness in the academy, although his analysis provided the grounds for forecasting the inevitability of that rise. Nature abhors a vacuum: the emptying from the curriculum of the high moral purpose of character formation and the acquisition of wisdom created a chasm into which a thousand ideological demons have swarmed. The credo of knowledge for knowledge’s sake no longer inspires when the knowledge to be gained is circumscribed to such minutiae as the history of a single market cross.

The crises and disasters of the last century have deprived the myth of inevitable Progress of its credibility. The selfless pursuit of humanitarian aims can persist only if that myth is revived through allegiance to political ideology that promises

millenarian transformation. A new kind of Gnosticism has captured higher education in the West, as Eric Voegelin predicted it would.²⁴ Gnostics “immanentize the eschaton,” transferring the hoped-for infinite value of salvation from the next world to the future of this one. The Judeo-Christian synthesis of late antiquity and the Middle Ages reconciled our longing for an infinite good with our acceptance of the finite conditions of human life by conceiving of the finite good of human virtue and wisdom in this life as a necessary stepping-stone to the beatific vision of God in the next. Modern political ideologues from the Jacobins to the Maoists seek to offer a shortcut to salvation, eliminating the need for the straight and narrow path of self-cultivation. Instead, scientific technique and philanthropic enthusiasm, synthesized by a seductively comprehensive political doctrine, promise to distribute an infinite good to everyone in the near future, if only we will swear our allegiance to the harbingers of revolution.

Willing participation in such political programs has become the most stringent and essential of all academic credentials. The one place in the world in which Marxism still thrives is within the literature and social science departments of American colleges and universities. The grip of political correctness upon these fields, however, extends throughout the system, from elite universities to community colleges, with only engineering, economics, philosophy, and a few other stragglers holding out. These pedantic revolutionaries are doomed to failure: no parsing of syntax or “reimagining” of popular literature and no critique of television sitcoms will ever overthrow the established order. However, the tactical folly of these Ches and Fidels of the classroom is little comfort when we take into account the huge costs they exact in the form of lost opportunities. Students

who spend their college years being drilled in the catechisms of the Left lose forever the chance to enrich their imaginations, inform their consciences, and stimulate their powers of reflection through reading together the great works of our tradition under the tutelage of the heirs of that very tradition. A university can encompass the study of many cultures, but it can perpetuate only one. The devotees of political correctness ensure that it perpetuates nothing at all.

Babbitt did note the tendency of academic ideologues to set up “an imaginary dualism in society to take the place of the real dualism in the breast of the individual.”²⁵ Babbitt anticipated Solzhenitsyn’s famous aphorism: “the line between good and evil runs through the human heart” (offered, coincidentally, at a Harvard commencement in 1978).²⁶ Only when the academy correctly locates the dichotomy of good and evil within the individual can it return to its historic role of assisting the good man in his perpetual struggle for mastery over himself and his wayward impulses. As Babbitt says, “By right selection even more than by the fullness of knowledge and sympathy, man proves his superiority of essence, and shows that he is something more than a mere force of nature.”²⁷ Information, sympathy, ideology—all of these are at best neutral parties, at worst goads and inducements to evil. Wisdom consists in the ability to distinguish and weigh, selecting the best and rejecting the worst. Such wisdom requires acquaintance with a fixed scale of value, anchored in the eternal verities of human nature and found within the intellectual patrimony of our civilization.

It is not enough simply to banish “political correctness” and all thought of a higher purpose, as Stanley Fish has recently recommended.²⁸ Fish is right to see transformative ideology in the class-

room as a colossal fraud, at best a waste of time and energy and a distraction from the real business of learning. However, so long as higher education is cut off from its classical roots, such illusory substitutes for true meaning and purpose will persist. The vast machinery of the academic industry depends for its survival on the successful recruitment of the narrow specialists of tomorrow, which in turn requires a more inspiring vision than simply the endless accumulation of meaningless information, or the construction of new interpretations of familiar texts, whose “truth” consists in no more than their being grudgingly accepted by one’s fellow drones. (Fish famously wise-cracked that, in academia, “the ‘truth’ is whatever my peers will let me get away with.”)

Recovering the Classical Tradition

“My dear friend, clear your
mind of cant.”

Dr. Johnson to Boswell

Dr. Johnson’s advice is indispensable. Any meaningful reform of higher education demands that we clear away the cant of scientism and philanthropy. The modern research university is the last holdout of Stalinist central planning, industrial-age mass production, and progressivist fantasy. If Western civilization is to survive, the Great Conversation initiated by Socrates and his friends must find a new water-course: the university is clogged and polluted beyond all hope of redemption.

The university is on life support, dependent on only two mechanisms: massive governmental subsidies (loans, scholarships, research grants, and direct appropriations), and *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* Higher education represents the biggest waste of public resources since the Great Pyramids. The value of university research and of university degrees is fatuously exag-

gerated by ignoring the simple distinction between causation and correlation. Both highly educated regions and highly educated individuals are unusually productive, but there is every reason to think that education and productivity spring from common causes (discipline, intelligence, and curiosity), rather than that education raises productivity. The *Griggs* case forces businesses to use college degrees as proxies for intelligence, since they are effectively barred from using the much cheaper and more reliable alternative of direct testing of prospective employees, unless they can meet the onerous burden of showing the tests used (which have disparate impact on various sub-populations) to be a matter of “business necessity.”

The upward spiral of costs and the downward spiral of perceived quality of higher education are rapidly pushing the system to a critical point, at which large numbers of highly intelligent young people will swell the ranks of the research university “refuseniks.” Once the brightest young people opt out of the academic circus, selectivity rates at the top will begin to fall, causing the colleges to lose prestige and their degrees to lose perceived value, resulting in still more defections, until the system collapses.

Marvelous lectures and texts are now available for free online as an academic open source. Social media and teleconferencing make possible the spontaneous formation of international communities of scholarly amateurs (in the original sense of the word), in and through which the heritage of the West can find its outlet. All that is needed is for the remaining scholars of the true republic of letters, those faithful thousands who have not “bowed the knee to Baal,” to join together to provide some formal quality control to the process.

The corporate and financial crises of the past decade, and the looming political

crisis of today, have revived in the public's mind the ancient truth that character matters. A successful revival of the classical tradition can only take place when the connection between liberal learning and virtue can also be brought back into view. This, in turn, requires the rejection of the fact/value distinction and the entire habit of scientific reductionism that has so dominated American life in the latter part of the twentieth century. It requires, too,

the outgrowing of the Rousseauist cult of spontaneity and enthusiasm. Such a revival of the tradition is possible; in fact, America has been the locus of several such revivals in the past. The reconstitution of civilization will begin with Burke's little platoons, growing organically into the space left by an increasingly sterile modernity. There is no substitute for patient, persistent toil, sustained by fellowship and by hope.

1 Irving Babbitt, *Literature and the American College* (Washington, DC: National Humanities Institute, 1986). **2** Richard M. Weaver, *Ideas Have Consequences* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1948); Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind from Burke to Eliot* (Chicago, IL: H. Regnery, 1960). **3** John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1959). **4** Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, 114. **5** *Ibid.*, 127. **6** *Ibid.*, 92. **7** *Ibid.*, 86. **8** *Ibid.*, 137. **9** *Ibid.*, 159. **10** *Ibid.*, 144. **11** *Ibid.*, 90. **12** *Ibid.*, 91. **13** *Ibid.*, 96. **14** *Ibid.*, 97. **15** *Ibid.*, 98. **16** *Ibid.*, 103, n.

12. **17** *Ibid.*, 100. **18** *Ibid.*, 101. **19** *Ibid.*, 123. **20** *Ibid.*, 126. **21** *Ibid.*, 125. **22** *Ibid.*, 122. **23** *Ibid.*, 157–58. **24** Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics, and Gnosticism* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2005). **25** Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, 107. **26** Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*, ed. Ronald Berman (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Foundation, 1980). **27** Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, 100–101. **28** Stanley Fish, *Save the World on Your Own Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).