

Institutional Issues
in the
Humanities

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INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES IN THE HUMANITIES

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PREFACE

This Society for Critical Exchange publication is devoted entirely to the proceedings of the Roundtable on Institutional Issues in the Humanities, held at Miami University on October 21, 1984. Sponsored by the College of Arts and Science as part of a three day conference titled "The Ends of the Humanities: Redefinitions," this program was attended by nearly 100 deans, department chairs, and faculty members invited from the region to engage in a dialog on critical timely issues that bear on the institutional status and the future of the humanities.

As these proceedings demonstrate, the exchange was lively and fruitful: it raised some fundamental questions, sharpened perspectives, and generated tentative responses. Perhaps as its simplest and most useful accomplishment, the Roundtable stimulated participants to speak, to listen, and to react. The issue was the institutional role of the humanities, and the outcome, perhaps, an increased sense of the vitality of that role.

On behalf of the College of Arts and Science at Miami University, I am pleased to see a record of this useful discussion in print and wish to thank the editorial staff of Critical Exchange for their assistance.

Stephen M. Day
Dean

INTRODUCTION

Kim Gannon

In October of 1984 the College of Arts and Science at Miami University sponsored a conference, "The Ends of the Humanities: Redefinitions", at which prominent speakers such as William Bennett, Ralph Cohen, and Juliet Mitchell presented their views on aspects of the humanities. The conference began on Sunday, October 21 with a roundtable on "Institutional Issues in the Humanities."

Prior to the conference James Sosnoski, Executive Director of the Society for Critical Exchange and coordinator of this session, sent a questionnaire to humanities colleges and departments within the geographic region. The six issues identified as the most important by participating deans and chairs constituted the themes for the engaging and sometimes volatile discussion during the Sunday afternoon session. Professor Ralph Cohen, the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English at the University of Virginia and President of SCE, commented incisively on the exchange of views, suggesting some directions that humanistic studies should take.

Contained in this volume are a synopsis of the questionnaire and its results, and a transcription of the discussion and of Professor Cohen's commentary. In editing the transcription, we have attempted to reproduce the conversational tone as closely as possible, cutting only what we felt necessary to maintain the dialogue's clarity. Unfortunately, we were not able to decipher some words and phrases, including the names of some of the discussants.

Roundtable on

INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES IN THE HUMANITIES

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: RESULTS OF THE
PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Moderator: James Sosnoski, Miami University

The results of our initial questionnaire indicated that the following six questions were most important* in the minds of the participants in the roundtable discussion on "Institutional Issues in the Humanities":

[*Note: The issues (groups of questions) are given here in the order of preference (A-F)--those most often identified as issues to be discussed listed first. The original questionnaire numbers are in brackets.]

A. [#2]

How is it that students have a relatively poor image of humanistic study? Is it a national or university-specific problem? Should it be reversed? Why? How?

Is the concept of "the humanities" appropriate to the 1980's? After all, one way of changing our image is by redefining ourselves.

B. [#10]

Critical thinking is disappearing from university education because controversy is avoided at all costs. Is this a damaging blow to the humanities since they study controversial issues involving interpretations, value judgments and criticism?

C. [#17]

Humanistic education relates a student to a muchbroader social and cultural context than does, say, a business education. Theoretically, humanities students, having acquired a wide range of critical skills, can fit their concerns into a broad social spectrum. Why are students unable to relate human- ities education to marketable skills?

Because the humanities are traditionally understood to be non-utilitarian, humanists do not think their studies are useful, and therefore do not think in terms of the marketplace. If so, should we rid ourselves of the notion that the value of studying the humanities is tied to its historically-contingent, non-pragmatic character?

D. [#23]

The humanities traditionally justify their work in terms of all three of the rationales we have mentioned--service, teaching human values and research. Are these aims compatible? For instance, can the humanities simultaneously and coherently establish the legitimacy of both the teaching of basic language skills (service) and the teaching of critical approaches to literatures (research) which are often unrelated to each other?

E. [#13]

In what ways do unwelcome teaching commitments--business writing, technical writing, etc.--imposed on humanists by economic pressures (e.g., the need to maintain a sufficient number of FTEs) invisibly reshape the humanities?

F. [#15]

To teach incoming freshmen basic skills is an altogether different service than giving History or Psychology majors material that can be related to their disciplines. How many kinds of services do the humanities provide?

Is the teaching of basic skills the central aim of the humanities? Are language requirements?

What is the relation between university requirements and the aims of humanists?

[Note: At least one of the above issues was listed by every participant who responded to the questionnaire when preregistering.]

BREAKDOWN OF SELECTIONS OF THE ORIGINAL QUESTIONS
FOR DISCUSSION

1. = .13%	11. = .30%	21. = .17%
2. = .65%	12. = .13%	22. = .00%
3. = .13%	13. = .52%	23. = .60%
4. = .30%	14. = .13%	24. = .13%
5. = .21%	15. = .47%	25. = .34%
6. = .21%	16. = .21%	26. = .08%
7. = .30%	17. = .60%	27. = .34%
8. = .08%	18. = .26%	28. = .17%
9. = .21%	19. = .21%	29. = .39%
10. = .69%	20. = .21%	

SOME POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS FROM THE RESPONSES:

Major Issues in the Humanities: (.69% - .47%)

The six issues listed above for discussion.

Issues in the Humanities: (.39% - .26%)

29. Is the recognition of humanistic values class-determined? If so, how does this affect universities which appeal to different classes?

25. Are departments archaic in the humanities?

27. How do we know that we have trained a humanist well?

4. To what extent do administrators believe that the poor image of the humanities is shared by the community at large? Does this image have any effect on endowments and the like? Can the values of the humanities be justified to the corporate world in ways that would draw financial support?
7. To what extent do the high school experiences of our students predispose them to disregard the humanities?
11. There should be a close relationship between any rationale for the humanities and the curriculum that embodies it. Do economic issues determine humanistic curricula in ways that effectively undermine their rationales?
18. If we consider the impact that the humanities can have on society, we would have to say that it lies in the domains of the interpretation and critique of cultural phenomena. But university administrators discourage popular publications in favor of academic publications. Is this short-sighted?

Minor Issues in the Humanities: (.21% - .17%)

5. In the administration of many universities departments compete for students on the basis of job-related curricula. Does this situation adversely affect the humanities?
6. Are the problems in humanistic education invariant? Or, do small liberal arts colleges experience them differently than large state universities?
9. Great humanists have tended to be controversial figures. Is this still the case? If so, can the humanities be revitalized without controversy? As an administrator will you risk controversy? Will you protect the faculty involved?

16. What is the relationship between the humanities as they are taught in the sphere of the university and the public sphere? Are there links between these two social spheres?
19. In selling a university education to the public, is there a tendency to promote vocational studies that are inconsistent with the larger aims of the humanities? E.g., business French, business writing, etc.
20. Humanistic research is not similar to scientific research. How do administrators recognize the differences in their evaluative methods?
21. Humanistic research does not have the immediate social impact that scientific research has. Consequently, there is a national tendency to reduce the role of the humanities in the university to service by limiting the amount of research funds available to humanists. Do university administrators exhibit the same tendency in their allocation of research funds?
28. When we recruit a humanities student, what are we recruiting that student for?

Non-issues: (.13% - .0%)

1. Why are the humanities today invisible?
3. How do administrators who wish to promote the humanities get the rest of the university to listen to their pleas?
8. Who would you name as a great humanist and why? Would that person be willing to teach in your university?
12. Student-teacher ratios often make teaching in the humanities far less effective than it might be. What is the solution here? Should our strategy be

- to accept such economic constraints and try to get around them by imaginative teaching techniques? Should we assume that all such economic constraints are beyond change?
14. Is humanistic teaching restricted by cost efficiency? E.g., if humane values are to be engaged they need to be debated, but team teaching in the humanities is rarely funded. [An assumption in this question is that, although teachers can debate issues with their students, debates among faculty are crucial to students' understanding of humanistic inquiry.]
 22. Literacy is a buzz word. Is there not a danger that research in the humanities will be eclipsed by such buzz words?
 24. How do you decide upon priorities? Should humanities departments focus their attention upon graduate students, majors, or the broad range of students? For instance, should we change such built-in traditions as "Freshman English" or "Western Civ" which focus upon the entire student body and concentrate instead on English or History majors?
 26. Is the value of humanities departments to an institution commensurate with their value as an area of humanistic study? E.g., is the value of a history department commensurate with the value of the study of history?

SOME POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE RESPONSES:

Should we infer from these responses that:

[#26] the value of an area of humanistic study is commensurate with its value as a department?

[#24] our priorities are presently sound with respect to our majors and our service to the general student body?

[#12] student-teacher ratios are not a problem?

[#14] humanistic teaching is not restricted by cost-efficiency?

[# 3] promoting the Humanities within the university is not a problem?

SOME ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FROM THE RESPONDENTS:

30. Can the study of the "humanities" afford to not include the "new technology"?
31. How is the content (or canon) of humanistic or literary study determined?
32. What studies should be required as humanities studies? What is the relationship between the General Studies curriculum and the humanities?
33. Why have the humanities had so little impact on our society?
34. Where is the evidence of the critical thinking that we supposedly teach?
35. Can we assume that "The Humanities = what literature and language departments teach," as the conference materials seem to?
36. To what extent are the various humanistic disciplines, as conceived and practiced by individual members as well as subgroups, responsible for the current impasse?

Departmental representation in the responses:

8 English
 4 German
 4 Philosophy
 3 Foreign Languages
 2 Humanities
 1 Theology
 1 Grant Director

Roundtable on
INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES IN THE HUMANITIES

DISCUSSION: SESSION ONE

Moderator: James Sosnoski, Miami University

Question A: How is it that students have a relatively poor image of humanistic study? Is it a national or university-specific problem? Should it be reversed? Why? How?

Is the concept of "the Humanities" appropriate to the 1980's? After all, one way of changing our image is by redefining ourselves.

David Baxter, English, Walsh College

When was there a time when students had this more idealistic image of the humanities? I tried to do a little bit of reading before I came here on when this promised land was, if it ever was. In my research, I came across a pamphlet published in 1941. Reading it was like reading something that had been written last week in terms of all the issues that we are here to discuss today. And so a question occurs in my mind: Is the plight really a lot different today than it might have been twenty, thirty or forty years ago? When we think back to a time when the image was better, what time are we thinking back to?

Arnold Shapiro, English, Ohio State University

I think there was a time--it was that time we now look back to with nostalgia of the late 60's and the early 70's--when, at least at Ohio State, there was a core of students who felt very much attached to the college of humanities, to literature, to philosophy, to courses that they saw as getting at values. And they were concerned with values. I myself have seen in recent years a trend away from that toward vocational education. Students nowadays want degrees

that will offer them jobs. Most of the students at Ohio State work very hard; their parents work very hard. They want jobs, and they see humanities simply as not offering them direct access to jobs. The other part of it, for many of our students, is a sense that the humanities lack discipline. They like courses where there is hard work, where they feel as though they're getting something out of it, where they're challenged. Very often they feel, though not directly, that in humanities courses, we just talk a lot, or at least, you know, throw stuff around. There isn't the same kind of hard stuff they would like to get. I think the two are interrelated, and within them I see a shift away from humanities involving some of our very good students, which disturbs me. Students that we might have had before are going into more career-oriented fields simply because they feel as though they have to.

Alan Galt, Germanic Languages, University of Cincinnati

I think one of the reasons they feel they have to is the increasing cost of a comfortable standard of living, at least by the standards we've established in society. Our students are looking for a way to maintain the living standards that we have grown accustomed to and that we may forget have advanced so far. High-tech living is costly and our students do not see monetary value in humanities, unfortunately. I speak not for them, but of the views that they present to me. I see this as a nation-wide problem, perhaps a world-wide problem.

Ernie Fontana, English, Xavier University

My experience is that, though many very good students are not majoring in humanities and are wary of humanities for economic reasons, they still are often curious, and will come to us for core courses. They often will confess, "I wish I could major in English, but what do I do with it? I'm majoring in something I'm less interested in, but I want to take as much English or whatever as I can." So even though there is an economic devaluation of humanities, I think there still is a curiosity and an interest that can be found intact.

James Sosnoski

Are you suggesting that we shouldn't take the notion that

we have a poor image too flatly, that it's only a poor image with respect to one thing, perhaps marketability, but it's not a poor image with respect to another?

Ernie Fontana, Xavier University

Well, yes. The way question #2 ["A"] is phrased is interesting. First of all, you're using very unhumanistic terms. We humanists are still concerned with essence, or something like that, and so the terms used to pose the problem are perhaps hostile to what we're supposed to be about. I think, of course, image is very complicated.

Michael Goldman, Philosophy, Miami University

I wonder if humanists themselves have some self-doubts about what they're about. That is, it might go with the territory. Humanists tend to be more self-reflective; part of our business is to be self-reflective, and that, of course, generates doubts. The very fact of having a conference like this is an expression of that self-doubt. I can't help but imagine that students pick up on that as a negative. People who doubt themselves, or say they doubt themselves, must have a reason to do so. Therefore, they avoid us or think poorly of us. I don't know how to change that; it just goes with the territory.

Marian Musgrave, English, Miami University

Nobody has mentioned something that shocked me when I came back to Ohio from the deep South. I found that "humanism" and "humanist" had been turned into bad words by the radical right. There was a group in Dayton called "Save Our Schools," who, in between times, when they were not spitting on black children who were transferring to white schools, were busy writing letters to the Dayton Daily News and the Dayton Journal Herald about Godless humanists.

Russell Weaver, University of Chicago

Last year at MLA, a professor from Yale used "humanist" in an equally derogatory sense from the other end of the spectrum. Humanists were those people who squelch untraditional inquiry. She was speaking basically from a deconstructionist point-of-view. It isn't just the right, it's both ends.

James Sosnoski

You raise an interesting point. I was quite curious why this particular question was ranked as highly as it was. I wondered whether people were responding to the first or the second half of the question and whether or not, in a group of this sort, people would seriously consider the possibility that the traditional concept of the humanities is inappropriate and outdated. I wondered if people here would actually take that seriously or not. Let me provide a context for this. We can on the one hand suggest that the difficulties with the poor image of the humanities are simply that, for one reason or another, they've been devalued. So we have to find a means of going back and recovering and recuperating the values that we know are there in our tradition, and find a different way of expressing them. The other possibility is that a notion like the humanities does involve concepts like essences, universal truths, and so on, which are incompatible with contemporary modes of thought, like deconstruction.

Sanford Shepherd, Oberlin College

I think we do have that problem, because we do have a tradition in the humanities that's expressed by the very words that we use. The word school means leisure. The word schole is leisure; ascholia is business. We are supposed to be people of leisure. The Latin word to refer to what we do is otium, which means laziness, studious leisure. Plato said that people should study. He said we should not study like a shopkeeper, who learns mathematics to count his change, but like the noble person who studies because that's what human beings are supposed to do. We are stuck with that tradition. I think that the objection that there's no longer any economic channel for humanities focuses on this traditional concept of the humanities, and I think we're in trouble simply because what we're doing belongs to a period so different from our own. If you study the American university system you will find out that people contributed their time to the colleges up to the middle of the nineteenth century. Doctors taught what they called "natural philosophy." Lawyers taught Latin and jurisprudence. The only person who was paid at Columbia University, if I recall, was the professor of Italian. If that's our tradition, I think we ought

not to forget it, but we ought to consider whether it should still have some grip on us.

Joe Bracken, Theology, Xavier University

It seems to me that the comment that we have self-doubts as a profession is true. I think most of us as professional teachers and professional researchers, you might say, for academic journals allow our ideals as to what we're about, by and large, to be governed by the academic conferences that we all go to a couple times a year, or by the journals we publish.

We have gotten into what I would call the German university approach to Wissenschaft which governs in large measure our dealings with one another. You worry more and more about less and less. That attitude tends to carry over into our writing and to some extent into our teaching. We are losing the focus for the student, for whom it is not necessary to know a great deal about very little but to be able to get into vital interaction with other people about the really significant issues of life. I think most of us find it difficult to keep those two sides of our personality together. On the one hand we have to be constantly at work on something that advances us professionally, which perforce has to be very specialized. At the same time we have to be the genuinely, vitally involved human beings who can engage the students on the only level where they're really interested -- the level of issues -- in a challenging, provocative sort of way. I must confess I have a lot of self-doubts about how well I succeed at either one.

James Sosnoski

Let me see if I'm getting the sense of things. I understand from earlier remarks that we have a tradition which we're stuck with, but that we really need to recuperate something that's intrinsically valuable. So the answer to the first question is basically that no, we don't need to change our conception of the humanities. Now I hear the last speaker saying there's tension between our professionalization which turns us into specialists and our interests as humanists which is incompatible with a continuous narrowing of our thought. This seems to suggest, although I didn't hear anyone say this, that maybe we need to do something.

Either we need to abandon to some extent our professionalization, which would then allow us more thoroughly to reinvest ourselves in humanistic thought, or we need to change our humanistic thought in some way to adapt it to an increasingly technological world. That's the issue I see beginning to surface here.

Ted Fiedler, German, University of Kentucky

It seems to me the issues are being put on an either/or basis, and I would prefer to see them more dialectically. I think you need the specialization in order to say certain kinds of things about phenomena that are important. But I also think the problem in the past has been that the public hermeneutic of humanities has gotten lost. I think much of the reason for that has to do with the professionalization that we are all subject to. But there's another factor. It seems that we're in a very chauvinistic phase of American culture at the moment. To go out of the academy at the moment and start talking about some of the things that I see wrong with American culture and relate it back to my expertise about the history of German culture is not likely to make me or my university very popular. I think that's an aspect that we shouldn't overlook. There is a very conflict-ridden history of humanists getting involved in what I think they ought to be involved with--and that is the culture in which they're working. So I see these things as being much more dialectic.

Herbert Paper, Linguistics, Hebrew Union College

It seems to me that the two things involved here are being discussed as opposite poles. One is the humanities in terms of their professional organization in university structures; the other is the humanities in terms of their internal value. If we're talking about the latter, then at this conference there ought to be people who are professional chemists, engineers, mathematicians, physicists, etc., who very often are just as much concerned with essences, values, and ethics, and implications of their fields as people who teach languages, philosophy and literature. If it's the former, then we, of course, are in a bad way because part of our poor image is our own fault. It took a long time before American literature was taught in American universities.

Literature was only English, produced in England. It was a long time before modern languages were taught. Languages were only Latin and Greek. It was still a long time before anything besides French, Spanish, German were taught. I'm thinking of languages for which there are tens of millions of speakers in the world and with whom we have much more to deal nowadays than we ever did before. It is appalling, as a recent report of one of the presidential commissions on foreign language instruction pointed out, that with the tremendous increase in involvement of Americans in foreign travel and with foreign countries, foreign language instruction has gone way down. Or look at some well-known places where, let's say, departments of philosophy have been converted into departments of logic and language analysis and where hardly anything other than the traditional fields of aesthetics, history, philosophy, and so forth, are taught. The same thing happens in certain other fields. How can the students, then, or the public, become aware of what we think are the internal values of humanities if indeed humanists themselves have doubts? And when I say humanists I don't mean to imply by any means that every teacher of language or philosophy or literature is a humanist; there are plenty of good classes of literature in which hardly any values are taught other than the technology of how one takes apart the text and finds the plot, the structure, and so forth. So there are these opposing aspects here. In some of the background material sent in the mail that I went over, it seemed to me that some of the issues were strictly administrative--Should or shouldn't there be departments? How do you define humanities within the university? There, of course, the problems are legion, and I don't know how--I certainly have no solutions. When I first came to the University of Michigan to teach, I used to joke and suggest that every good university or every good college of arts and science should get its faculty together in a big room every ten years, abolish the departments, and have them choose sides all over again. I'm not so sure it's a joke anymore. It may well be that, choosing sides over again, political scientists may find themselves more at home with psychologists and historians and literary people than with their traditional colleagues.

James Sosnoski

It does seem that your remarks connect with the earlier comments in the following sense. Your uncertainty as to whether departmentalization is advisable presently is attached to the whole question of specialization, departments having originally in the late nineteenth century at Johns Hopkins been the homes of specialists in the German research tradition. So we put ourselves in that position. I guess the question that comes to my mind is, what's the relationship between having put ourselves in this institutional position and our poor image? Is it that because we're in departments we're doing things that are inappropriate, and as a consequence, we are undercutting and defeating ourselves with respect to the institutional side of things?

Sister Mary Colleen Dillon, English, Thomas More College

I'd like to ask the group, instead of thinking immediately in terms of science and technology, which seem to be formidable opponents that make us look irrelevant, if any of us have looked lately at the schools of social science. I think that's where a lot of our problems come from. Departments of Education, I think, are the worst. They make behavior a quantifiable thing; they standardize test scores, and success tends to rise or fall as salary increases in numbers. So you're remarking about wanting to learn something hard. What's harder than what Michael asked before about the doubts and fears and the unanswered questions of the humanities? I think it's the very hardness which can't be quantified, and therefore your merit raises can't be attached to it. This is undermining us more than anything.

Peter Rose, Classics, Miami University

It seems to me that there are two historical dimensions to this which have come up and disappeared again. One is simply the historical function of humanities traditionally defined. The second is the question of whether that definition of humanities needs to be historicized. In the first case as someone suggested earlier, there is a very clear kind of economic determinism which can be traced. In the late 60's, for example, in my own field, Greek was tremendously popular partly because of an institutional decision which valued it as much as math. But also because there were

students who specifically wanted to take something which they defined as useless from their parents' perspective. It wasn't just the 60's; in the 50's, when I was in school, it absolutely never occurred to me whether humanities was a minority position or not. That I could be unemployed as a Harvard Ph.D just didn't occur to me. It, in fact, happened to me. So I know it's possible. I think you can trace enrollment pictures that are quite clear. The second part of the question we are addressing I think is really more important. Again I use my own field as an example. In the late nineteenth century, the heyday of classics, the humanities' function was to give a kind of aura of gentility to people who were upwardly mobile or to train imperialist bureaucrats; you read Eucydides because that was the best place you could learn about the problems of running an empire in an electoral democracy; you read Cicero to find the right rhetoric, and Casar to find out how to keep the natives down. The fact is that there has been a tremendous expansion of important new disciplines which the traditional definition of humanities has by and large failed to adjust to. This comes back to the point that I think Jim has raised a number of times; it is ridiculous for us to define "humanities" in the same way that it was defined in the Renaissance when there has been the growth of psychoanalysis, of serious political science--a whole range of things.

Question B: Critical thinking is disappearing from university education because controversy is avoided at all costs. Is this a damaging blow to the humanities since they study controversial issues involving interpretations, value judgments and criticism?

Michael Bachem, German, Russian, and East Asian Languages, Miami University

The other day I heard a comment on television which said that the roots of the problems of today are not technical inadequacies or insufficient resources, but a failure in human relationships. In part, I see our function as working toward a definition of what the humanities are, looking at

and studying the expression of different human relationships or how other people at other times have articulated these relationships. The gentleman from OSU discussed something earlier that rang a very clear and loud bell: the students' perception that we have no discipline. I think one of the problems in this connection is that humanists or literary critics have frequently accepted, because of the tremendous pressures and obviously the tremendous success of the sciences, the methodology of sciences. That is, science has progressed by discovering increasingly more minute subdivisions; every day there's a new subparticle discovered. Somehow we have, I think, accepted the methodology of a forever ongoing subdivision. That, of course, is not right. It is a difficult problem. One of the attempts to articulate this has come from Northrop Frye, whom I'm sure many of you know. He has said that the things that humanists do, and more specifically perhaps that literary critics do, are not the general expression of an attitude toward life, but a constant shuttling back and forth between texts. I think if we want to come to a sense of the definition of what we are, these are some of the things that we might keep in mind.

Nat Wing, French, Miami University

In attempting to bridge the two questions, I wanted to make a comment about the relationship of image and critical thinking. To pick up on what Mike Goldman said earlier, I think, in part, our problems come from the nature of the inquiry. We are in the odd position of advocating, at our very best, ambivalence--that is, the nonresolution of problems--critical problems. We are engaged, not in pursuit of a single discipline with its notion of boundaries and essences, but in a very pluralistic inquiry, which, at least in my area of study, involves linguistics, psychoanalysis and philosophy. In terms of appealing to and projecting an image, to go back to that metaphor, and explaining ourselves to a community, great difficulty exists. Very frequently, we're talking on the one hand about competencies which are a given in a particular culture; and we have a very valid function in that respect. On the other hand, we're deconstructing, to use a loaded term, at the very moment, the validity and the bases on which those judgments are made. To take a functional view of education, which is the one I think

prevails in most universities, there is a simple misbalance between those spheres of our activity. It's out of skew. That very imbalance, I think, is a fascinating problem which generates a great deal of intellectual energy and passion. I think perhaps what's needed is to take that field as a basis for explaining what we do, though I think that is inherently problematic and creates difficulties for those whom we are addressing.

Russell Weaver, University of Chicago

The gentleman over here talked about the problem of leaping between texts, and the question of values has come up variously. I think that we need to think about what actually happens in a humanities class. You leap from text to text, and if you're going to investigate the text or investigate the values arising from it, the text will obviously have precedence because that's what the test is going to be on. The test is going to be on the text, not on the values. I think that some of you may have the experience of having a student come back to you and say, "You know, I was thinking about that, and this idea germinated," and without the leisure not only to have to think critically about the text, but about the values which give it value, you end up just having the text.

From that emanates the sense of the dryness of the humanities. I just spent the equivalent of seven 50-minute classes teaching Vanity Fair and barely made it through. Some questions of values came up, but I know that we could have spent another seven classes talking about those values. I assume that values are somehow involved in humanities, even be it the values of ambiguity. There is something about the nature of our education where, frequently on the quarter system used at the University of Chicago, our feet barely touch the ground in one term before we are leaping ahead to the next set of texts. The process of germination does not take place, and we forget, those of us who have been out of school or who have been working at a graduate level for a long time, that we can sit and think about these things for a long time. But the freshman says, what's the next book I've got to read? What do I have to know about it? What if I want to know about the ambiguity of the text, if that's what the professor is interested in? Or the plot? Or the theme?

Or the social relevance? Or whatever it may be?" We'd like students eventually to think critically about values. But if we only think critically about the text, the issue of critically looking at the plot--which seems dry as dust, but is really preface to thinking about values--is all that gets done. Somehow this gets reduced to the nuts and bolts of the problem and the humanities end up not having a good image, even if we encourage a certain kind of critical thinking.

Ilse Lehiste, Linguistics, Ohio State University

I would like to talk a little bit about the difference between the humanities on the one hand and the natural sciences on the other. One of the basic differences between the two is that the natural sciences tend to be relatively more objective, whereas the humanities are subjective. I am referring to a division between noncumulative and cumulative sciences. Noncumulative sciences are those in which each successive generation has to re-create a sense of values for themselves, make the discoveries all over again. Cumulative sciences are those in which each successive generation builds on the achievements of the previous one. The natural sciences are cumulative par excellence. This is why we have seen such fantastic progress in them. I would classify the humanities as noncumulative. Each generation has to re-establish the set of values for itself, and we can't be cumulative. Imagine that, since Shakespeare, we would have been able to build on each successive generation, making comparable leaps. But, we haven't achieved the level of Shakespeare in many generations.

However, in our democratic society, everybody's opinion is just as valuable as everybody else's. When you are making value judgments, then there is no way of convincing someone that this person's value judgments has to be respected over some other person's. I feel that I'm on the side of the natural sciences--that it is possible to have something objective in addition to the subjective views that you get with it.

James Creech, French, Miami University

I'd like to follow up on Nat Wing's comment about the difficulty of selling ourselves in a particular way; on the one hand--selling ambiguities as we do, on the other hand--

having a product that everybody can recognize. I'd like to propose some affirmation of the notion of tradition and see what response it gets. Tradition, you have to understand, is implicit in this discussion already. Tradition is memory, and I would disagree to a certain extent with the previous comment that there's no cumulative effect of this century-after-century of humanistic tradition. Humanistic tradition does exist. It's something that we have in the form of a text, in the form of the tradition that infuses itself in period after period. On the one hand there's that part of this tradition, this memory, which we're expected to pass on to the people who come after us. On the other hand there is another aspect of tradition, which is that the humanities, at least since the Renaissance, constituted a reference to some sort of tradition past the classics as a means precisely of taking some sort of distance from, or operating some sort of change relative to, the moment in which one lives. So, the kind of ambiguity that was referred to before, the kind of critical thinking that is the subject of the second question, is the other part of that tradition. The difficult thing for us, it seems to me, is somehow to keep our gaze solidly fixed on that dual function of tradition. Tradition is on the one hand conservative, that which passes on the same to the future. On the other hand, it's that which allows one to differentiate oneself from the present context, the present political, social, aesthetic, economic, or whatever context in which one finds oneself. It's not that we have to apologize for the absence of some sort of content or some sort of tradition.

It's rather interesting that we should have the fortitude, the strength, and the acumen necessary to look at what tradition means. And if we could stand on our understanding of what tradition means, then we would have something to say, we would have something like self-confidence. Also, there are other kinds of issues which tend to tangle up the machine: questions of technicity, if you will, how we organize our curriculum, how we organize our professionalization, or our professional structures--all of those questions would become secondary, it seems to me.

Arnold Shapiro, English, Ohio State University

I guess I have two separate concerns. This separation in

ourselves came up earlier: as scholars we are writing more and more about less and less, and yet we have to go into the classroom and teach broad concepts. I don't think that necessarily has to be the case. I have had the experience of reading, say in an article in literary history, about narratology or something of the sort, then going into a basic "What is fiction?" course where we're trying to identify the main character in The Great Gatsby. You know, you get the intellectual bends. I am convinced that reading the article helps me teach The Great Gatsby, and even in answering the question about who is the main character in the novel. In short, I don't think the specialization of our scholarship necessarily creates a dichotomy in terms of our profession as teachers. At large state schools we teach everything, we teach everybody, at every level--I feel we somehow manage to put the pieces together pretty well.

But I want to get back to this question of critical thinking because that does bother me. I think the question is not posed right. I do think there is critical thinking in the classroom. We have nothing but critical thinking. I mean, we have critical thinking at every level from freshman composition on up. What I don't see is critical thinking outside the classroom. I feel that I have much greater freedom than I did ten, fifteen, or twenty years ago at Ohio State. I think I can say anything I want in my class within certain decent boundaries. I can't take my clothes off yet, but I suspect I could do that too and not get into too much trouble. That might mean we are irrelevant. We are always teaching critical thinking, in every single one of our courses and, as I say, we don't get into trouble any more--maybe because of the times--for what we say. I don't see how that is shifting outside the classroom. And that may go back to this question of image and relevance.

George Wolff, English, Clermont College

I can understand the question of the value of critical thinking that we do in the terms of the lady from Loraine College who said: when you look at critical thinking as it's done in the sciences, you can see the ends toward which it moves and you can decide when critical thinking has been successful or when it hasn't. I think that in the humanities we seem to engage in critical thinking without a definite

result. It invalidates the whole process. We seem to be engaging in the process just as an end itself. The argument was made by the man from Miami's French Department that even if you look at tradition, it does not seem to move to a definite end that you can hold up and say, here is where we have come, this is what we have arrived at. As an English teacher, I think back to 1922 when Elliot's Wasteland seemed to be a picture of the Western tradition in literature and philosophy and the arts after several thousand years. What had it come to? The results of the tradition, at least in his mind at that time, were not things that he could hold up for admiration.

Al Michael, Bowling Green State University

I think maybe in some ways we may be flattering ourselves. I think one of our problems is that we're less capable communicators than we think we are. Sometimes we get off on issues like defending ourselves against the sciences, when in some cases we're our worst enemies. For example, at Bowling Green last spring, we did, in connection with an NEH grant, a survey of our faculty and students. In the survey, we asked a set of questions about what they perceived as going on in their literature classrooms and what they felt should go on in them: questions about critical thinking, value analysis and analyzing literature. We ran across an interesting difference between the faculty and student perception of what was going on. The students felt that we placed too much emphasis on analyzing literature. They wanted us to place more emphasis on value analysis. The faculty felt that they placed a lot of emphasis on value analysis, and a lot less than the students thought on analyzing literature. This, I think, ties up with what the gentleman from the University of Chicago said, that when we think we are talking about values, whether we are or not, the students perceive us as talking about texts. They want us to go beyond the text to values, but they don't recognize that we're doing it. They rated value analysis very high, and I think that's an indication that we're not, at least I don't think at Bowling Green, fighting the sciences in the humanities classrooms. The students want value analysis. We're not giving it to them. Or at least we're not giving it to them in such a way that they can recognize it for what it

is. What has made me try to rethink this is not so much the old arguments between utilitarianism and the humanities, but what I am doing in the classroom and how I can make more apparent to students what I'm trying to communicate -- the methodology, if you will, which is a dirty word except in colleges of education.

[Unidentified speaker]

Don't you think that this result comes from the study of humanities? One of the ends of humanities is to come to the conclusion that all or most values are invented--they're fictions. You study a literary text; you finally get into the issue of why marriage is considered in the Victorian novel and why there is this whole ideology about marriage and family and the woman's role as different from ours. If you study enough texts from different periods, you're studying not just the texts but the language of values, and you might arrive at the conclusion that there may be very few eternal values, and most values are invented. That's the end that I think we reach. It is either liberating or alienating. It's not remarkable, since we live in an era when certain values are assumed to be natural and absolute. We teach students to be critical of people who assert the inevitability, the eternity and the naturalness of values. Our disciplines are the ones that made values and are in fact historically invented. This tends to estrange the students from the mass society they are in.

Sanford Shepherd, Oberlin College

It's true that values are invented. Mathematics is invented. It's the invention of the human mind. The idea goes back to Vico who said that we understand what we make and since we make mathematics, we understand it perfectly. We cannot understand what we do not make. The study of science produces a different attitude, a different set of facts. We did not make nature. We cannot understand nature in the same way as we understand what human beings make. We can imagine ourselves into being human beings in a human world. We can imagine ourselves into a novelist's mind, into even the mind of so-called primitive, or ancient people. It's possible that we can understand some of this. We can probably understand anything objectively; but can we really

understand what we don't invent? I don't particularly think people are going to accept an idea like that. It doesn't seem very practical. It doesn't seem to have any economic channel. But I think that the humanities does indeed deal with human imagination. It can be studied only through the human imagination. It has to do exclusively with values. I don't think many people in the humanities would disagree with that. What we want to find out, I suppose, is how we can make this somehow intelligible to people who are living in a world that was described so many years ago.

Ellen Messer-Davidow, Center for Women's Studies, University of Cincinnati

I want to relate question B, that critical thinking is disappearing in education, to question A. On the contrary, I think that a great deal of very good critical thinking criticizes the humanities themselves for not being humanistic. I'm very specifically referring to the criticism that disciplines purportedly studying human beings have failed for the most part to study a number of them: for instance, women, people of color, non-Western cultures, disadvantaged classes of people. It isn't only women's studies that is coming up with exciting criticisms along these lines and in great detail--also, criticisms, for instance, of the universality of principles when these principles are derived from very limited pools of data. I think this is a problem; it creates a negative image of the humanities because new people have entered the academy, both as students, and as faculty and scholars. These are some of the people who are making the criticisms. My problem is that I'm not sure that academic institutions know what to do with these people, with the idea of cultural diversity or with the criticisms that have been raised. Even more broadly than that, I think it's a major issue right now in this country. I'm not sure that the country has decided what to do with the issue of diversity and diverse people and cultures. To me a lot of what's been discussed ties in with the theme of the conference--the ends of the humanities: redefinitions. Because I think some of the best criticism right now of the humanities aims for a redefinition or a transformation of them so that they're much more inclusive and in many ways more exciting.

[Unidentified speaker]

I didn't want to respond to this last remark. Instead I'd like to respond to a former one. I disagree that scientists have portrayed themselves as objective and I think that one of the things that the humanities have shown in recent years is that the sciences are as much a creation of the human mind and culture as anything else. One of our jobs, and one of the positive things that we do, is to continually remind our students of that fact. I was walking on campus the other day behind a couple of people. One was telling the other how valuable and terrific this semester's courses were. He was obviously talking about his business courses. He said, "You know, you could finish a college education in two years if you just didn't have to take all those 'bull-shit' courses." I think it's our job to perpetually and constantly remind them that in fact the human mind is re-creating its reality, its scientific realities, cultural realities, and, as a consequence, its notion of the right way of doing things. If we think of ourselves in those terms, we are serving a very useful social function. Ambiguity is good. Uncertainty is valuable. If we define ourselves as doing that, then I think we can feel better about ourselves. But I don't know if our students will feel better about us.

Michael Payne, University of Dayton

I really find myself puzzled by this very simple issue. We are talking about humanities within the university. We're not talking about humanities in some broader sense. It seems to me that before I can answer questions about the function of the humanities in the university system, I need the function of the whole education that people receive in a university clarified. If people define the function of the university experience in terms of vocationalism, then it seems to me that we can challenge that and try to show that the humanities and the other kinds of things that they study are really an intrinsic part of their education.

Joe Bracken, Theology, Xavier University

Without discounting what I think is a very valuable question that we have to address, I would like to get back to the contribution before yours, partly because I'm a philoso-

pher by natural bent and to some extent by profession. I do think we in the humanities are saddled with certain fundamental philosophical problems that have to do with the nature of truth, the nature of objectivity, and so forth. There is an ambiguity in our society about the nature and value of objectivity. Curiously enough, the natural scientists seem to be moving away from the idea of objectivity about the same time that we in the humanities seem to think that we're finally achieving some measure of it. The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle is certainly drawing a measure of doubt into the minds of the natural scientists about the objectivity of their own experiments and whether or not it is possible to have a totally objective viewpoint. But, over and above that, I think the issue of truth is terribly crucial. In a practical way, as a number of people have said, we more or less inculcate studied ambiguity as a result of the study of the humanities. We expose people to multiple points of view. It's part of a liberal education not to fasten on to a single viewpoint as "the truth," but to be able to see the issue in a broad context. What we've forgotten then, or what we tend to lose sight of in some measure, is "Okay, so we have all these views, now which one do I choose?" "Am I willing to, so to speak, 'go to bat' for it, am I willing to allow it to become a value in my life, and mold my life?" Here, once again, our professionalism in a subtle way encourages us to encourage among students a laid-back attitude towards what we ourselves recognize as our most important contribution--namely, the communication of values, so that there's an almost studied indifference there, and we're really not getting at the truth issue. Thus we handle the issue of meaning. But very seldom do we want to commit ourselves to what we regard as truth because we're afraid of being regarded as old fashioned, or bigoted. Those are philosophical issues, I feel, that in some ways are handicapping us within the profession, quite apart from our competition with the natural sciences.

Gary Stonum, English, Case Western University

I want to comment on what you were just saying. We've heard five or six people articulate what's really our traditional heroic image of ourselves--mental liberation. I say "ourselves" in order not to distance myself. The nearest

thing to a justification that I've got for myself is that we expose people to perspectives and ways of thinking that get them to the point of recognizing the fictiveness of certain kinds of values and constructs, and recognizing ambiguity. In the last five or six years I have been beginning to suspect that that doesn't work. I think that this is perhaps related to the mismatch that the man from Bowling Green saw between faculty and student attitudes. The students that I see at my university are not dogmatists. They don't come in believing that there are certain natural laws, even those whose own behavior would suggest that. Instead they come in quite cynical. What you learn from growing up and arriving at college at the age of 17 and 18 in the United States is that it doesn't make any sense to limit certain ways of thinking, certain ways of doing things in the world in which they are true, valid and validatable. You assume that they're not. Some of my students tell me that learning about ambiguity and more sophisticated ways of seeing how that's so isn't doing a thing for them. What they want to do is the next step: "If that's so, how do I live?" I don't have the answer to that. Some say that's been our business for several thousand years.

Albrecht Holschuh, German Studies, Indiana University at Bloomington

I would like to shift to a somewhat different angle because we seem to have a kind of a consensus emerging as to what we are about and what our self-doubts are. I'd like to shift to an aspect related to, as it says in the title for our session, "Institutional Issues in the Humanities." I want to be a bit more pragmatic about it. What happens in the classroom and what happens in the study has something to do with the reward structure of the institution. It depends a little bit on what we reward people for and what we reward them with. And, of course, in an indirect way, this will lead to who the people are who we teach. The reward structure in the university currently leaves, in most institutions, relatively little room for the question of what our efforts are good for. The research which is required at virtually all institutions--at least for promotion, if not to keep your job in the first place--can be and better be very specific. It is certainly more rewarding in this regard to

have written on, let's say, the function of the subtitle in the early novels by author X, than to have opened the question of value judgments for undergraduate students in a publication that they can read. Because that would be classified as pedagogical; it would not count at all in most institutions. The same goes, of course, for teaching. You know how teaching can be quantified by the types of courses you teach, and so you know what you're rewarded for is likely to draw you away from what we think the humanities should do.

What we reward people with can equally be called into question. We reward them, of course, with funds which are insufficient to maintain the standard of living. This is not an internal problem, but an external one. There's not enough money to go around. But, if I have somebody who's very good as a teacher of the humanities, do I reward that person with more opportunities to teach? Do I reward that person with the opportunity to teach smaller groups? Do I give that person a sabbatical leave in order to sit back and think? No, of course not. If I think I want to give a very high reward, I'll give that person money. Or, a smaller teaching load. If somebody proposes a sabbatical leave project, it better be specific research in something which is of little value to humanities. Many of us here are administrators who feel frustrated by the system; we have not found any good ways of influencing it.

Ilse Lehiste, Linguistics, Ohio State University

I would like to come back to the question of the function of a university education. We have been discussing mainly the relationship of a teacher to a student. I think that the function of a university is much wider than that. On the one hand, its function is to provide for cultural continuity transmitting to new generations existing cultural achievements. But, the university is not justified in its existence if it does not create new knowledge. And, for me, the creation of new knowledge is the more valuable part of the university education. In fact, I'm willing to make a value judgment here and say that the creation of new knowledge is an absolute value in itself. Now, when we have provided this continuity, we have probably served one generation, but this is where it has stopped. The humanities should not just try to defend their fortress. I think we don't have only a

fortress to defend--we have new lands to conquer.

Herbert Paper, Linguistics, Hebrew Union College

I'm sorry to see this discussion take the form of us good guy humanists and them bad guys in the sciences. First of all, I think it's a misjudgment. It's a misdefinition. And we gain nothing by trying to defend this fortress. If we've got something to say let's say it and let's say it well. I don't find any evidence that critical thinking has disappeared in the university or in the outside world for that matter. There's a lot of critical thinking and a lot of criticism going on right now. I call your attention to the fact that the definitions "us good guys", "them bad guys" "scientists", "social scientists", "humanities," are all outdated. I look at the fact that the American Council of Learned Societies, which is a sort of holding company representing the major 44 or 45 of the major and some minor and professional associations in the humanities, have as constituent members (many of which were founding members of the ACLS) the fields of political science, sociology, anthropology, economics, history, legal history, psychology, and history of science. That's no accident. I find that for the last 25 years the ACLS and the SSRC, which is the comparable holding company of the social sciences, have established any number of joint committees, dealing with all kinds of aspects of world study. I find that the National Science Foundation has for many, many years had a panel or a division of social sciences. I find that the National Endowment for the Humanities covers many of these fields as well. I don't think things are as bad as they're made out to be. I really deplore this constant "we" and "them" kind of debate. If we have something to say in the humanities, let's say it, defend it, and create new knowledge.

Peter Rose, Classics, Miami University

I'd like to come back to the question that's come up several times, of the function of the university--the function of education within an historical context--because I do think one positive point of your comments was that we shouldn't waste this opportunity to lobby with administrators who may be present. I think one of our functions has certainly been to reproduce existing social, political, and

economic relationships by transmitting what are perceived as the appropriate ideologies. One of the crucial historical factors here is the whole phenomenon of the 60's in which the critical function was perceived by state and local administrations, and even university presidents, as useless. I know at this university, though I wasn't here at the time, faculty members who were involved in anti-war activities were told they were getting no salary increment whatsoever. I have heard that the branch at Athens was particularly cut back in funding because it was seen to be more troublesome than others. In that context, I think it is true that there has been a discouragement of the function of critical thinking precisely by a discouragement of humanities. This comes back to the issue of institutional decisions. The student demand of the 60's for more relevance in their courses has been used in the 70's and 80's as an excuse for surrendering any responsibility to define what constitutes a really good education, and to set that up in terms of a set of clear requirements.

Also, there's been a tremendous erosion of clear requirements for any kind of general education courses, civilization courses and foreign language courses, partly because there's a fear of not being able to sell the degree in a period when the pool of available students is shrinking. But I think that is a terrible surrender on our part. That's where we should really fight to pressure our colleagues, particularly administrators, to take leadership in defining exactly what a component of an acceptable undergraduate education is going to be--courses involving not just issues and values, but also specific cultural skills, like foreign languages up to a certain level of competency.

Question C: Humanistic education relates a student to a much broader social and cultural context than does, say, a business education. Theoretically, humanities students, having acquired a wide range of critical skills, can fit their concerns into a broad social spectrum. Why are students unable to relate humanities education to marketable skills?

Because the humanities are traditionally understood to be non-utilitarian, humanists do not think their studies are useful, and therefore do not think in terms of the market-

place. If so, should we rid ourselves of the notion that the value of studying the humanities is tied to its historically-contingent, non-pragmatic character?

John Trapani, Philosophy, Walsh College

I'd like to call our attention to the third question and why students are unable to relate the humanities education to marketable skills. It seems to me that we've answered in good measure something about the first and second questions. Those of us who are present today are positive in our approach to and our affection for the humanities, so we would have little difficulty making a justification for them. In terms of critical thinking, I think we've seen evidence that it too in good measure is very much alive and well. I think the real question is not simply do we have a difficulty in teaching our students or convincing them of the value of the humanities, but in asking a broader question. That is, what has happened to the values in our society from which undergraduate students have emerged? I think one of the reasons this has become a crisis of the humanities is that we have also witnessed a shrinking of the number of available students, and universities and colleges are fighting for survival. So, as soon as we begin to fight for survival, we need to ask and answer questions that pertain to relevance. What we observe is a decreasing number of students who are available to an expanded number of colleges and universities. When we observe the majors that the students are electing, we find that the humanities then end up rather low on the totem pole. What happens, then, is that those departments that have justified larger student enrollments seem also to be able to justify their larger budgets. We then find ourselves in the position of having to justify our own existence within the university structure. Traditionally the humanities have been communicated through written skills and reading, yet we live in a media age and students, for the very most part, have contact with what happens through TV, through film, and through recorded music and music videos. Consequently, that gap needs to be addressed.

[End of first session]

SESSION TWO

Question D: The humanities traditionally justify their work in terms of all three of the rationales we have mentioned--service, teaching human values and research. Are these aims compatible? For instance, can the humanities simultaneously and coherently establish the legitimacy of both the teaching of basic language skills (service) and the teaching of critical approaches to literature (research) which are often unrelated to each other?

Question E. In what ways do unwelcome teaching commitments--business writing, technical writing, etc.--imposed on humanists by economic pressures (e.g., the need to maintain a sufficient number of FTEs) invisibly reshape the humanities?

Question F. To teach incoming freshmen basic skills is an altogether different service than giving History or Psychology majors material that can be related to their disciplines. How many kinds of services do the humanities provide?

James Sosnoski, English, Miami University

I suggest we begin this session of the roundtable with the last three questions, which seem to have a kind of unity and are, in a vague way, separable from the first three questions simply in that they address matters more directly having to do with curricula. So, maybe we could begin with D and the problem of integrating the growing number of service courses, like technical writing and business writing, with the aims that have traditionally been understood as the aims of the humanities, like critical thinking. I might, from my own personal experience, ask to what extent critical thinking is a part of the business English writing course. I teach that sort of course myself frequently, and I'm a bit puzzled as to how I might introduce critical thinking, in the sense that we would ordinarily talk about it in the humanities, into business correspondence. In any event, question D asks whether or not we can bring coherently together the various kinds of rationales that we've always used for humanities departments.

Frank Knoblock, Unaffiliated

This is perhaps a corollary to your question about the role of critical thinking in business English. If the function of the university is to educate the sons and daughters of the ruling class to assume their responsibilities, then isn't the whole question of critical thinking moot? How does this square...

[Unidentified speaker]

When was the last time you taught a ruling class son? Where was he?

Frank Knoblock

Well, we're at Miami.

[Unidentified speaker]

There surely are children of nonruling class members in the rest of society that go to Harvard, Yale, Chicago, and a lot of other places.

Frank Knoblock

Yes, but I'm not so sure that it's as clear-cut. There are doors apparently opening. There's some women's studies, but the question was raised earlier about people of color and women and the third world population.

[Unidentified speaker]

Informal poll: How many people sitting in this room who are on faculties of American institutions of higher learning have fathers who were professors, or professionals or members of the ruling class? I don't see many hands. My father wasn't.

Paul Smith, English, Miami University

I think Frank's question is absolutely appropos, in spite of the objection from the corner here. It seems to me that Frank's notion of the ruling class needs to be extended to take into account the notion of the ideological ruling class, which we certainly do teach.

[Unidentified speaker]

Would you expand on that?

[Pause, no answer.]

James Sosnoski

Perhaps we can assume it's not just a question of money, but a question of the production of ideas and symbolic capital.

Ted Fiedler, German, University of Kentucky

Coming from the history of German, I would say the ruling class may be an issue. But I think the people who we're not teaching at all and who are probably going to decide the value issue in this culture is the lower middle class, and that's a real problem that is excluded by what we're talking about. Perhaps in a sense it reinforces what you're talking about. But, if there is an attempt to entrench bigotry in this society, I would say it's in that class because it's constantly being socialized and indoctrinated along those lines. My suspicion is that the ruling class tends to be more open-minded than it's being given credit for here at the moment.

[Unidentified speaker]

I think my colleague was trying to get at the function of the university. I would just call your attention to a book more in my own domain, that perhaps wouldn't be familiar to many of you for that reason, but which has had great currency in the area of theology and, to some extent, philosophy. It's a book by the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, called Pedagogy of the Oppressed. He distinguishes sharply between two styles of education. The first style, the more traditional one, he calls the banking system of education, where you deposit education, or bits of education, into the students in order to retrieve it at exam time. He says that particular style of education is geared to maintain the status quo. Therefore, universities by and large perform a highly conservative function within society because they perpetuate values which are already in place. Thus, they do not lead students to do any critical questioning of the system for which they are being prepared. I think the vocational issue fits right in there because basically you're training people for taking their place in an already established society according to this banking concept. Opposed to

that, he discusses the conscientization process, in which you get people to think critically about themselves and their environment, and how they can aptly change it. I'd be the first one to admit it's a highly idealistic approach to education. When I taught Paulo Freire's book I had to sheepishly admit to the students that they would be graded on a banking style. Even so, I think the issue is very important for a discussion, not only of the humanities, but of the place of university education in the country.

James Sosnoski

I'd like to point out that the seventh ranked question [Question G] has to do with the relationship between class and university systems. In that we're taking off on the fourth question. I'd like to capitalize on the fact that you did draw something of a connection. For the purpose of discussion we might reflect about the relationship between the university and society by thinking in the context of courses like business English. If we ask who we are serving, the answer is business. We're talking about the relationship between the university as a system and the corporate world.

[Unidentified speaker]

Humanities actually serve the business community. Capitalism, especially at this stage, assumes and needs changes, changes in values, changes in image. Capitalists have changed. We teach our students to become restless, dissatisfied, to seek identity elsewhere, to bequest identity through various consumer goods, even in the consumption of culture. We are educating people to serve the image-producing and manufacturing industries. It's not just a question of business English. I think when we're doing our most radical and imaginative teaching, we may be serving certain corporate interests. We're not just teaching people to write business English.

Marian Musgrave, English, Miami University

As an expert Negro and as a person who has been reported a respectable number of times to my chairman, my dean, my provost, and my president for subversive teaching, I was bothered about what the gentleman from the University of

Kentucky's German department said about his belief that the problems of entrenched bigotry come from the lower middle class.

Ted Fiedler, University of Kentucky

I didn't say they came from, I said that's where they're located.

Marian Musgrave, Miami University

Okay, that's where they're located. And I question that, too. I question that because I was trained by my experiences in the deep South to ignore the lower middle class because, except for beating you up, they had very little power to keep you from a job, to keep you from a house. It's the affluent middle class that is really a danger. There was a study done by B'nai B'rith that showed that the educated bigot is the worst kind of bigot. The educated bigot, when you attack one of his strongholds, simply relinquishes it to the heathen, and takes another position, which he defends with all the influential arguments he can bring to bear. If you doubt this, go into the history of the justification of slavery.

Alan Galt, German, University of Cincinnati

I have taught a course for a number of years in business German, but that's not really germane to the issue here. Last week, I sat in on the campus review committee for Fulbright applications. One of our applicants was an excellent candidate in medicine, who proposed to go to Paris to carry out an experiment under the protection of a physician there who has equipment which could measure a summit aspect more precisely than anything else in the world. He came to the committee with minimum effective skills in French and was interviewed in French satisfactorily. The problem was that his application was the sort of application one would prepare for a grant from the National Institute of Health. There was nothing in it of humanistic values. Nonetheless, the committee--which consisted of, besides myself, an economist, a musicologist, an historian, and a professor of communications--because of the qualifications of this young man, felt he could be recommended very highly because nothing could be better for such a person than a year in which he would quickly carry out his experiment in the laser lab of a Paris

hospital and then have lots of time for sitting on the Boulevard drinking wine. I am not being entirely facetious in this, but rather saying that whoever taught him elementary French did something of genuine humanistic value. Because this physician, I would hope, will graduate with his M.D. and Ph.D. having taken time out from the pressure of his medicinal studies to spend a year in another culture, becoming enculturated in another way, through a channel that he would not have had access to if he had not taken French. Basic French, then, is a channel to a more humane perspective on humankind for this high-tech physician.

Sanford Shepherd, Oberlin College

That's an interesting point. We are all humanists, and I suspect that what we call humanism is the history, the literature, the art, and the culture of free European countries, England, France, and Germany with about seventy years of the Italian Renaissance. I suspect that's what we're talking about. However, this is not an entirely tolerant society, and I think that studying our native culture probably reinforces certain ideas which perhaps should not be reinforced, and that includes French. At Oberlin, the humanities program's main function is cultural contrast: the contrast between East and West, and comparative literature, not simply England, France, and Germany, but also Near Eastern and Far Eastern literature. This is a way to avoid problems in humanities. We're dealing with a small group of cultures, very closely related, and they do not give that good a vantage point. We're not talking about humanity, whatever that means, we're talking about a peninsula of Europe and about very few countries on that peninsula of Europe. I don't know how many of my colleagues can name for me many Spanish writers. I think they talk about Don Quixote and windmills. I think they don't know anything about Portuguese literature. I don't think they can name a single Arab writer, or a Persian one, unless it's Omar Khayyam. So, we have the problem of a very narrow perspective. I think one of the ways to combat that is to simply make comparisons of so-called exotic cultures--the non-Western, non-European cultures. I think if that's done, then it's possible at least to get some sense of what goes on in other places. I give a course in which I do contrast East and West, Near East and

European material, and I use Arabic philosophy which simply denies cause and effect in every way, shape, and form. It comes as an enormous shock to the students that they don't know what to do with this sort of thing. It was explained to my students by another student who discoursed on Karma. It was marvelous. But most students are not in possession of that kind of information; they don't have courses of that sort. We should think of humanities in a much broader way than we do.

[Unidentified speaker]

I'm bothered by the second of the three questions about the courses that we don't like to teach, like technical writing. I teach technical writing and I like it. I think we are a little bit too concerned about being contaminated by the sciences, soiling our hands with trade, and defacing the supposed high values of the humanities. I think there is a great deal in the humanities that can be brought to bear in practical courses. There is a great deal of practical truth that we can learn from dealing with people who have to work in the world. I like to use in the classroom an example of a study that was done on reading levels. One example is the directions for administering an antidote to rat poison is written in something like eighth-, ninth-, or tenth-grade reading level. I see that as a moral issue. If I ever had to use that antidote, I wouldn't want it written in about the fourth-grade level; I would be very upset. There is a moral level to communication. I think there is a real important thing that can happen with respect to readings in something like tech writing when one discovers that he does have an obligation to an audience. I've seen a lot of humanists become better writers for teaching like technical writing because they are more aware of an audience. I think that concept, linked with an humanistic awareness on the part of an instructor, can do a lot for students in business and technology. And I think we can learn a lot from the students.

James Sosnoski

If you don't mind, since the response seems to be directed at a remark that I made earlier, I want to comment myself, for a moment, then go back and put on my other hat. I agree with you that there are moral issues to sort and to

identify and I don't think they're insignificant. I do think there are elements of critical thinking, certainly at least the process of reflection when you think of it in a cognitive psychological way that might be applied to business writing. But it seems to me that those concerns are a very, very far cry from the kinds of concerns that we more typically associate with the humanities which have something to do with issues involving very large-scale considerations of human relationships of the sort that might figure in feminist discourse. I think, although the kind of moral issue you point to is there, it's very hard to contextualize that particular moral issue in these larger scale frameworks.

Britton Harwood, English, Miami University

Let me follow through on marketability and the same comment you were responding to, Jim. I think that the students are hired because they are able to adapt writing to audiences and are willing to do that for money. I do not think they are hired because they have a moral sense telling them they ought to do that. I think humanities students are marketable to the degree that they can show they can participate in interference with the world, whether through the manipulation of data or the manipulation of language. Now, I do not think they are hireable so far as they ask why that interference ought to take place because investigators arrogate to themselves that kind of question as against salaried employees, although there may be an in-house assistant some place.

I think we make difficulty for ourselves by a kind of wrong approach to the humanities at least when it comes to curriculum such that the humanities becomes a kind of wastebasket. I think that goes back to the first question about why students do not respect us. So, you find linguistics courses, structuralist courses featuring structuralist anthropology, which certainly shade to the sciences in some respect, all satisfying humanities courses together with courses in the history of science or theater appreciation or world literature; they all qualify, as against the sciences which are reasonably clear about what they want to accomplish within curricular requirements. If you look, for instance, at this university, there's no sense that we have any clear notion about what we want to accomplish with the humanities

requirement at all. I think should we answer that by saying that what we mean to teach at the present time is how values come to be. We're not to that degree going to make our students marketable. That doesn't mean that we ought not to do it. I don't think all values are created; I think exchange value, for instance, is not created. Exchange value has a reasonably long history, but perhaps it's not universal. I think the reduction of tension in a mucous membrane has a value which has a very long history. I think there are some good things that are not invented. Nevertheless, there is culture mediating all of that, which if it's arbitrary, as Saussure points out, nevertheless cannot be modified by any single individual, by an act of will. How those values, which have a very long history, are mediated by culture is our business, and it seems to me that our curricula ought to be fairly clear about that aim. Thus we ought not to let students satisfy humanities requirements with everything from elementary rhetoric, which may not take this up, to linguistics or theater appreciation. That seems to me a kind of acceptance of marginalization. I think we push the question of value at the present time, or of critical thinking, because we have become marginal. I believe we are implicated-- that is, we came into a growth market after Sputnik, many of us, to find ourselves presiding over shrinking graduate programs, or we took Ph.D.'s in the humanities expecting an easier time with employment than we had. So, I think we raise the question of critical thinking by virtue of our own implication. But, that's all right. I mean we're the ones who hurt, and so I think it's the job of the humanities to raise the question of who's hurting: how do we know, in light of what values do we call this hurt, how did those values come to be, how does that relate to things which are not so susceptible to change? That is, we have to mediate between biology and culture.

Andrew Ross, Illinois State University

I do want to add a brief rejoinder to the class issue which has been raised by members of the outer circle, and which perhaps symptomatically hasn't been directly addressed by members of the inner circle. It seems to me that it's obfuscatory to think of class values in a very reductive or empirically conceptual way, such as to say that the lower

middle classes are not the ruling class, but to ask what our fathers actually did. This is America, after all, and I'm not being facetious when I say that. This attitude toward class values is only accentuated by the fact that we do work in institutional environments where class values are to a certain extent held in abeyance or at least with a sort of (cordone sanitaire) placed around them. I suppose I'm really addressing an old humanist idea, an old humanist term about the future leaders of society. I'm bringing up the question again of an ideological ruling class. In a sense I'd like to see someone in the inner circle address that question: the responsibility of teaching an ideological ruling class, a future ideological ruling class and the responsibility of the humanities in that project.

Lisa Frank, Miami University

I'd like to address the gentleman who was talking about teaching other cultures to his students. I was disturbed by the fact that what you see yourself doing in the class is putting your students in possession of ideas like Karma or ideas that are not related to structures of cause and effect. Is that any different from putting them in possession of the more Western European tradition and is that any different from putting them in possession of any other thing? Is not that the problem?

Sanford Shepherd, Oberlin College

I don't think it's a question of putting them in possession of information or of material that they can do anything with. The students come without any background except the background they've gotten from Western civilization, which I said was England, France and Germany. That's what they come with. Only that. They have no idea of the enormous difference in perspective that other cultures have. Even something as well known as the Bible, which was not written in English and cannot be interpreted from its English translation, very often says things which are quite different from what the students think and sometimes from what the professors think who have to depend on translations. So there are things that you can do by dealing with contrasts by trying to show the fundamental difference in perspective or in thought. Certainly that's, I think, a better approach if you're

interested in inviting their perspectives than simply emphasizing the native cultures. That was my meaning in making the statement that I did.

[Unidentified speaker]

I'd like to suggest that the malaise that was introduced earlier is related to the general malaise felt by humanists. I'd like to attempt a connection between the marketplace and values. I believe that this malaise felt by the humanists is perhaps due to our present historical circumstances; that is, we're at an historical juncture when the bases for our values, which derive from the Enlightenment, are disintegrating. There are certain unbearable tensions created as a result of this. There are tensions between this traditional image of the humanities, the traditional role that the humanities are supposed to have, and certain realities that are beginning to dawn upon us and are certainly felt or understood more or less clearly by our students. Because our students realize that it's the free marketplace, the free enterprise system, consumerism, that determines the values, those are the things that really count. On the other hand, the so-called marketplace, the free enterprise system, I believe, needs the humanities as some sort of an alibi because we established this facade that there is a system of values to live by--morality. But beyond this facade the unrestrained operation of the free marketplace forces is possible--things can go on in their usual manner.

Herbert Paper, Linguistics, Hebrew Union College

It seems to me that some of the topics that have been raised now would properly be the topic for another conference. There's a lot of fancy generalizations that have been put forth which I find jejeune and sophomoric concerning classes and so forth and so on with no data. Now if we're going to just sit around and talk fancy generalizations that are unsupported by anything but our own observations or rising from contemplating our own navels, that's fine, but that's not a conference.

George Wolff, English, Clermont College

I think later on this conference is going to get into ideology and humanities--you may come back to it again. I do

have a question. [In the context of what's being implied by several people in the inner circle, and apparently also by some speakers in the outer circle, and given the parochial limitations of the humanities as we usually teach it (that is, German, French, British, and American), I really don't understand the repressive or, I guess, class conservative idea that we're being accused of fostering. I really would like someone to explain what is so conservative about the enlightenment values that we teach, or what is so conservative about Thoreau or Emerson?

Lisa Frank, Miami University

I'm a student. There's been some talk about students; I don't know if that makes my comments more or less welcome. There's also been some talk about justifying the humanities, and my feeling is in the context of discussion of classic theology that the reason humanities have difficulty justifying themselves right now is because they're redundant. If their function is to foster critical thinking of the sort that Mondale and Reagan enact, if their function is to teach students to create values, well they learn that every day on the television where everything is always new and improved. If their function is to defend themselves against positivism, my students are not positivistic. If their function is to put students in possession of knowledge, students don't need to learn how to possess. That's the dominant ideology, if we could call it that, very shorthand.

[Unidentified speaker]

What is wrong with possessing an idea?

Lisa Frank, Miami University

There's nothing wrong with possessing an idea. That's not my point. My point is--where is that in any way promoting the kind of critical or self-critical or reflective capabilities that we seem to assume humanities have and foster?

Peter Rose, Miami University

It would be ridiculously pretentious to try to summarize very quickly the vastness of it. But, I would like to at least try to address the question of what is there that is

potentially conservative or reactionary about the humanities. It seems to me there are two crucial aspects. One version is of the notion of a tradition which defaces history that is the notion which I think, particularly in my field, classics, is bread and butter for as long as I've been associated with the field, that human beings have always been essentially the same. What is great about Greek tragedy, for example, is that it deals with essential human problems and essential human nature which rendered irrelevant the specificities of, say, Greece in 431. Instead they get at this notion of a kind of constant human essence. And that constant human essence is usually defined in terms of a kind of bourgeois individualism, which is in fact characteristic of specific historical era. In the second chapter of Terry Eagleton's Literary Theory, he talks about the rise of the study of English as a substitute for religion in which a canon of specific authors is set up as a vehicle for transmitting from one generation to another a safe set of values. I would agree with you that any author in that tradition has enormous radical literary potential, but I think that is the way the humanities has been defended. We're going to hear from William Bennett tomorrow night, who was pushing classics in my field precisely for all that I would say are the wrong reasons--the notion that there is this kind of core human nature which never changes. The reason that's self-serving in a contemporary context is that it effaces the possibility of really significant historical change, reinforcing in students the notion that what we have now has always been essentially the same or has always been just a kind of fumbling anticipation of the present when history is stopped.

[Unidentified speaker]

It seems to me that what's important about literary art in the humanities is that it does suggest that we have something in common with someone living in 5th century B.C. in Greece. But instead of reducing it to a platonic essence, it clothes it in a specificity that is an essential part of the humanities.

[Unidentified speaker]

I do think that we in the humanities have to be somewhat critical enough to realize that in our very passion for the

classical standards we may be advocating more or less theory in the abstract, where knowledge for its own sake and values for their own sake are to be cultivated, and not contextualized in the terms of the society in which we find ourselves, the sex that we happen to be, the particular classes of society that happen to be attending our institutions, and the function of the institution within the broader society, its being state supported, private supported, if private supported by what types of corporate institutions, who serves on the board of trustees. It's an immensely complicated issue. It seems to distract us from truth and knowledge for its own sake. But I do think that at least in my discipline and I suspect in others shortly, the praxis-oriented people are going to force us to realize that the element of, what you might call, location, our contextual location, is every bit as instrumental in determining what we consider to be true and false as the classical norms of truth and falsehood.

[End of second session]

INTRODUCTION OF RALPH COHEN

Edward Tomarken

If we are going to try to discover something about the ends of the humanities, it seems to me that we have with us today someone who is himself exemplary of one of the means whereby we can achieve this goal, for Professor Cohen integrates so many of the different kinds of disciplines that make up the humanities. In these terms, let me introduce to you Professor Ralph Cohen, the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of English at the University of Virginia, who is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Advanced Institute of Indiana University. Professor Cohen has written two books on James Thomson's The Seasons. The first, The Art of Discrimination, published in 1964, is a work of immense range, containing, for instance, a chapter on the interpretive function of the bibliography of the poem as well as a chapter using the illustrations of The Seasons to explain the function of art as a form of literary criticism. In the second work, The Unfolding of Thomson's 'The Seasons' (1970), Cohen demonstrates how a reading of a specific text can alter our view of literary history. His present project, a book to be entitled Genre, Narrative, and Literary History, exemplifies Professor Cohen's breadth of historical research. This book is concerned as much with the Renaissance as it is with the eighteenth century, and with formulating a new theory of genre as well as applying that theory to seventeenth and eighteenth century literature. As most of you know, Cohen founded and still edits New Literary History, the most important journal of literary theory. This review has established literary theory as a separate discipline and has provided the kind of methodological rigor that will sustain it. Moreover, it is a journal that is international in scope, providing translations of scholarship not only from France, Germany, and Italy, but also from Russia, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Recently, in recognition of his intellectual achievements, Professor Cohen has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. I hope that you will join me in welcoming a great humanist with whom it has been my great pleasure to

have studied for the past twenty-five years, Professor Ralph Cohen.

COMMENTARY

Ralph Cohen

Listening to the discussion of the institutional issues in the humanities reveals, I think, some of the most troubling problems that confront all of us, and, indeed, some of the uneasy answers and some of the nonanswers that pertain to these issues. Since I have been asked to summarize the remarks and to comment upon them, I shall try to present to you what has been said here, and make some remarks upon these statements.

I'll begin, however, not by going A, B, C, D, through the questions, but rather in terms of what I felt was your aim in dealing with these questions, trying to present a coherent picture of the way the argument developed. I think the first issue that you repeatedly raised had to do with the nature of the humanities. Of the definitions that were suggested, one was that the function of the humanities was the realization of the fullest possibility of being human. I should say, although that was presented in the context of radicalism, it's the most ancient of the views of humanism's function. The second was that the definition of the humanities ought to be the analyses and history of the study of human relationships and of texts in which human beings are involved. The third was that the aim of the humanities is to reveal that all of its values are invented; thus the aim of the humanities ought to be to deal with the imaginative constructs of human beings. As teachers of the humanities we ought to point out the nature of these constructs. To this there was one major addition: the ends of the humanities cannot quite be unfolded without understanding the ends of a university education. With regard to this issue, the ends of a university education were seen as the providing of a body of knowledge (by implication pertinent to the possibility of being "human") and the development of an awareness of the kinds of problems human beings have to face. Thus, the aims of a university education ought to be considered, at least in part, vocational.

The aims of education were not discussed in detail, but out of this vocational emphasis came a discussion about the class nature of education. The argument was that, as a consequence of their existence in a capitalist society, institutions would obviously seek to frame their ends in terms of certain capitalist aims. Whether these aims would be the reproduction of the values of the dominant class or whether they would be merely the ideological underpinnings of such a class, the point was that the humanities education which a university provides is inevitably ideological.

It seems to me that at issue here is the question of how we teach. Not only do teachers teach differently, they have different views about the nature of the texts they use. If we should argue that a text is inevitably ambiguous, which is an argument of the Marxist Fredric Jameson, then every text which seems to support the ideological order also has elements that undermine it. Should we then assume that the ways in which we speak are ideologically ambiguous, that in speaking we defend certain values, but in defending those values also oppose them--the view of the deconstructionists? If this is so then one of the difficulties of humanist discourse is a disagreement about how to talk about the humanities. It is one of the consequences of this difficulty that in discourses of and about the humanities different views and confrontational language arise. And both of these were evidenced at this meeting.

It wasn't long before someone announced that an "inner" and an "outer" group existed in this discussion, although the members of the "outer" group hadn't been either polled or consulted. But the two groups suddenly were identified as separate entities which were dialectically involved, though neither group, so far as we know, seems to have any agreement among its members. If we realize that this is what goes on in normal discourse, how much more do we have to protect ourselves in seeking to redefine and rethink what it is that the humanities do?

Now, one of the aspects of what the humanities do is a phenomenon that came up only once in the discussion, in a negative context. I'm talking about the argument by the anthro-

pologist Clifford Geertz in The Interpretation of Cultures. His argument is that anthropologists need to learn the techniques of literary analysis because in literary analysis the understanding of how interpersonal relations operate is far more advanced than where we have come in anthropology. Victor Turner writes that, as anthropologists, we must study the concept of ritual, by going to those who study behavior in the drama, that is, the analysis of drama. From them, he said, we can learn the nature of the kinds of phenomena that are involved in ritualistic interrelations. If we turn to medicine, anyone who has ever visited a physician recognizes the interpretative procedures he uses to establish symptoms and to draw conclusions about them. Tell me, he says, how do you feel? How's your appetite? Have you had any severe pains recently? We, as humanists who are concerned with analyzing works, recognize at once that the physician is seeking a context which will become for him the basis for a syndrome. Anyone who's ever sat listening to a doctor begin to inquire into the symptoms knows that those are diagnostic questions, the answers to which become part of the evidence leading the physician to a more or less probabilistic conclusion. Anyone who has read or written a legal brief knows that the nature of the presentation resembles what we try to develop in critical thinking and writing. My point is this: If we recognize that the procedures of the humanities interrelate with and participate in the activities of people throughout our society, we will stop thinking in the narrow terms of our own disciplines. We will recognize that it is necessary to see that certain ways of thinking and speaking are characteristic of human behavior in all areas of our culture. And that these can be aided, abetted, shaped and refined by the study of humanities.

And it should be pointed out that the apparent division between the study of the natural sciences and of the humanities needs to be abandoned. When Thomas Kuhn explains that his understanding of the practice of science comes from the history of art, we know that that's the basis for his argument for paradigms. We realize that the notion of objectivity is in a sense undermined by the very fact that any concept in science is a human construction. We realize that imagination in the arts and imagination in the sciences

are not validly separated by polarities such as imagination/practice, objectivity/subjectivity, because concept formation in science no less than in critical theory is conjoined with imaginative and ethical values. Anyone who has read James Watson's The Double Helix knows very well that his analysis of the genetic tree is intermixed with highly involved interpersonal relations which inevitably affect the practice of science.

If we realize these matters, then we need to redefine what the humanities are and realign ourselves in terms of such redefinitions. I put aside the question of whether the students have a poor image of us or whether we have a poor image of ourselves. It's all true; they have a poor image of us and we have a poor image of ourselves and of them. It's all unfortunate. But it has nothing to do with the case. Anthropologists have a high view of us. Sociologists, who are writing the poetics of sociology, have a high view of us. People who deal in ideology have a high view of us. Scientists have a high view of us. If we don't have a very high view of ourselves, it's deeply unfortunate. In fact, many of us even think that literary texts have no effect in shaping the consciousness of human beings in their everyday lives. But governments do. They censor books; they prevent people from writing certain kinds of books; they remove books from libraries. They know that books are dangerous, that books can alter the way people think and feel. Governments know that books affect people. But many of us don't, perhaps because we teach books and conceive of them in narrow and extremely limiting ways. Our attitudes to texts, to students, to nonstudent readers have to be redefined so that we place ourselves differently in the framework of our studies and our institutions. Supposing as a sort of hypothetical framework for future discussion we say that the humanities are studies that shape us and help us understand the divisions, agreements, and disagreements that characterize all discourses--all descriptions, interpretations, and evaluations of human actions. Now wherever these occur, that's where the humanities are.

In an article by Clifford Geertz published in The American Scholar he wrote, "My analyses of Bali would be helped if I

knew more about literary theory and about how it could be used." But he added, "Every time I go to the people who are involved in literary theory to find out what it is, they disappoint me." People are looking to us for ways of dealing with actual human situations. We fool ourselves if we think that we can influence the consciousness of people in our classrooms, in our society. And certainly, as was brought up again and again in the discussions, we need to be rather specific about how to create consciousness of the texts we teach and the talk we talk. All writing, Levi-Strauss says, is exploitative, and it behooves us to inquire whether or in what way it is exploitative. If two Marxists like Thompson and Althusser can be deeply divided about the consequences of writing, it behooves us to realize that we can't easily lapse into ideological talk as though it's self-evident. What is self-evident is that texts are in themselves ideologically ambiguous. Some of us know this and teach this, though there is no agreement about it. But all of us seek to make the students conscious of the need to reexamine what we're saying, what they're saying, and what we think the texts are saying. We thus create an atmosphere of awareness of how values are strategically manipulated. Some use themes to illustrate this, others use gender, still others refer to textual "ruptures" and textual concealment.

When the question of values arose in our discussion, speakers granted that it was necessary to teach values. I don't see how one can do otherwise. We are obviously teaching values whether we know it or not. That doesn't seem to me to be the issue. The issue is where do values lie and how do we deal with overt as against concealed values? What kind of alignments should we make with other disciplines so that we can deal with the uncovering of values and the strategies that are provided to cover them up? All the disciplines I have been talking about are concerned in analyzing the values of a society. That's what we're supposed to be doing, and that's what indeed we do. I think it's certainly possible to teach any kind of writing, business letters as well as critical essays, in such a way that the writing is seen to embody certain types of value. Whether we want to adhere to or resist these values is for the students to decide. But we have to understand what they are and how they can be un-

covered--the ways in which even a business letter has a strategy of deliberately concealing certain attitudes in order to win specific kinds of responses.

As this session concludes, we might ask ourselves, "What usable ideas, attitudes, knowledge can we carry away from this three-hour meeting?" "What intellectual baggage shall we take with us as we leave?" The first is that a genuine exchange of views is possible--that there are grounds for communication and discussion of these matters. A conference initiated by the dean of the college to inquire into a humanities agenda is itself a humanistic act. Then we need to consider important reorganizations of the curriculum in the college of arts and sciences. If what I have been saying about other disciplines is reliable, then we need changes in the curriculum that would establish closer relationships among courses in the various departments--whether it's literature and history or history and law, whether it's economics and literature or history of literature and history of science-- in order to relate humanistic study to marketable skills and practical concerns. The more our students understand what goes on in terms of overt, concealed, strategic practices in human discourses in and out of the classroom, the more they will be prepared to understand and control communication.

The study of the humanities has in our time been conceived too narrowly. The disciplines based on discourses share with the study of nature--with the sciences--common problems of rhetoric, interpretation and values. We should no longer permit ourselves to be captives to a mistaken notion of a self-contained discipline. Governments recognize the power of texts; they censor them, control them, prohibit them. We must not trivialize texts, treat them as mere games. Rather, our task is to analyze and illustrate their power and authority.

We may not agree on the values we attribute to texts since these obviously confirm social values and often at the same time attack them. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that teaching the humanities compels us to confront social implications and we ought not to disregard the uncomfortable questions, "What

values do I wish to pass on to my students?" "What ends do these values serve?"

Many of us are involved in the teaching of writing and this appears distant from the values I have mentioned. But the teaching of writing is also related to ordinary oral discourse and to the ordinary reading human beings do. The values in speaking, reading, writing touch all members of our society. Who is there who is not an interpreter?

Let us not forget that the "humanities" are a group of disciplines and it is necessary for us to become more cognizant of what is going on in other disciplines, more aware of how our own discipline interconnects with others. Our studies are not sealed off from human issues in anthropology, sociology, history, and law, etc. Nor should we--administrators and teachers--be sealed off from ourselves. We should be as concerned about our own growth as that of our students, concerned not only about teaching the humanities but about exemplifying humanistic attitudes in our teaching and administering. One discipline may not in itself be able to change the content and structure of the humanities, but in league with associated disciplines, redefinition and reorganization are possibilities.

If we take away from this session, at the very least, a renewed desire to rethink these possibilities, I would venture to say that what has occurred here can resonate in rooms and corridors where future learning and living await us, our students and our disciplines.