

Chapter Six Coming of Age in Harvard Square

During the time I spent as an Instructor in General Education and Philosophy at Harvard, I became an engaged, vocal, politically active critic of American society and governmental policy. I also matured into a scholar and philosopher ready to enter the Great Conversation as a full participant with my own distinctive voice. Though I did not realize it then, those three years worked a substantial transformation in me.

But first, I had to face thirty-three Harvard and Radcliffe undergraduates. Soc. Sci. 5 met as a group each Monday at 10:00 a.m. in Burr Hall for a lecture given by one of the six of us who were co-teaching the course. On Wednesdays and Fridays, we broke up into sections. There were thirty lectures a year, so each of us would give a block of five. I drew the segment covering the rise of capitalism, the scientific revolution, and the French Revolution, which meant that I would not have to perform in front of my colleagues until well into the Spring semester.

In the >50s, as many as half of all Harvard undergraduates were products of elite private schools, where classical subjects were still given pride of place. It was a good bet that many of my students would know a great deal more about Roman history than I. Nothing daunted, I worked up some lecture notes and went along to my assigned room to meet my class.

After a few introductory remarks about reading assignments, required papers, my office hours and the like, I launched into the story of the Roman Empire. AWe begin,@ I said, Awith Caesar, who was camped outside Rome with his legions.@ A young man in the middle of the second row began to shake his head very slowly back and forth. I froze. This was the first day of my entire career, and I was already crashing and burning. I thought seriously of chucking the whole thing and returning to the Army, which, I was sure, would permit me to enlist for a full three year hitch. Giving it one more go, I pressed on. ANow, there was a law that no Roman

general could bring his legions into the province of Rome itself.@ The young man very slowly nodded his head up and down. I breathed a sigh of relief, and never looked back.

My rule of thumb was to stay one century ahead of the students, which took some doing as we rushed past the Merovingians and the Carolingians, barely pausing for the investiture of Charlemagne on Christmas Day, 800 A. D. I even brought in some authentic medieval helmets, courtesy of Fogg Art Museum, which to my astonishment allowed me to remove these eight hundred year old artifacts for a few hours from their collections. As the months went by, and my folders of lecture notes grew thicker and thicker, I grew more confident. The preppies were not as big on the Middle Ages as they were on ancient times, and with two millennia to cover in thirty weeks, we did not linger.

There were some bad moments, of course. One day in the Spring a student asked me what the difference was between a Jacobite and a Jacobin. I had read about both, of course, during my manic survey of European history, but I could not quite call it to mind that a Jacobite was a seventeenth century supporter of James 1st and a Jacobin was an eighteenth century French revolutionary. Still, Soc. Sci. 5 was supposed to be about *ideas*, and there I was in my element. I had no trouble fielding questions about scholastic metaphysics or the theory of the social contract.

My colleagues= Monday morning presentations were marvels of erudition. One of the odd quirks of the Harvard culture in those days was that even very senior professors, who gave short shrift to doctoral dissertation students or senior honors thesis writers, poured their hearts into the lectures they prepared for big undergraduate courses. Jim Billington led off with five lectures on the Roman Empire and the Constantine Conversion. Jim was an historian of pre-revolutionary Russia whose first scholarly work, *The Icon and the Axe*, would make his reputation. I thought he wore his religion rather too visibly on his sleeve, presenting the fourth

and fifth centuries not as the decline and fall of a great empire but as the triumphant victory of Christianity.

Jim was followed by Arno Mayer, whose lectures covered the barbarian invasions and the Middle Ages. Arno was an odd choice for this segment, since his specialty was twentieth century diplomatic history. He was writing a book on the interaction between domestic politics and international policy in the major nations that participated in the Versailles Conference. It was from Arno that I learned my first lesson about what *real* historians do. I came across him one day in the stacks of Widener sitting at his carrel reading. On the desk in front of him was a row of enormous volumes stretching the entire width of the desk. "Hi, Arno," I said, "what are you doing?" "I am reading the *proces verbal* of the Versailles Conference," he replied. "All of it?" "I blurted out, astonished. "Of course," he said, looking at me rather quizzically. I said a silent prayer of thanks that I was in philosophy, and moved on.

It was also Arno who unintentionally taught me a pedagogical lesson that has stood me in good stead for forty-five years. His first lecture dealt with the waves of invasions by Germanic tribes that brought the Roman Empire to its knees. Arno had the brilliant idea of relating these invasions to the major battles that had been fought by Germany and the Allies in World War II. The terrain was of course the same, and inasmuch as the rivers and valleys had not moved in the intervening fifteen hundred years, the two made a lovely fit. The five of us sat in the last row of the lecture hall and marveled at the brilliance of Arno's presentation. But when we next met our individual classes, we discovered to our dismay that the students had been massively underwhelmed. The problem was simple. It was nineteen fifty-eight, and our students were eighteen years old, which meant that they had been four when most of those battles were fought. The Second World War was ancient history to them, something their parents did. They had never

heard of the Battle of the Bulge.

Sad to say, this experience has been repeated endlessly over the decades. The Freshmen I now encounter were born during the Reagan Administration and probably came to some degree of awareness of the larger world during Bill Clinton's second term. Anything before that might as well be ancient Rome. For many years, I compensated for this absence of historical memory by extracting my philosophical examples from *Star Trek*, but even that draws blank stares now, and as I do not get HBO, I cannot substitute *The Sopranos*. There is nothing that makes you feel older faster than teaching undergraduates.

My own lectures were something less than masterful, although considering my lack of background, I consider it very creditable that I got through them at all. In the lecture on the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I thought it would be nifty to do a dramatic demonstration I had heard about, but never seen. A very big, heavy metal ball would be suspended from the ceiling of the lecture hall by a cable, and I would pull it all the way back until it was touching my forehead. I would then release it, allowing it to swing way out over the class. As it swung back, seemingly on course to crush my head, I would stand immobile until, obeying the laws of the conservation of momentum, it would stop just as it reached me. I fielded this idea at lunch one day, and Gerald Holton told me in no uncertain terms not to try it. No matter how firm your belief in the laws of motion, he said, you will find it psychologically impossible to remain steadfast. He told the story of one young Physics Instructor who stood with his back up against a rack full of empty soda bottles, to prove that he was not moving. When the ball got close to him, he flinched and sent broken coke bottles all over the classroom. I settled for throwing nerf balls at the class to illustrate the arced trajectory predicted by Newton's Laws.

At lunch that day, I sat down with a young man who had been at the lecture. He was shy

and diffident, but very brilliant and painfully honest. I had a special place for him in my heart because his father was one of the Communist teachers who had been fired from the New York City school system during a red scare in the forties. I asked him what he thought of the lecture. Very tentatively, looking down at his tray, he said, AWell, uh, you know, it wasn=t very good.@ He was right, of course.

Several times each semester, the six of us would get together to make up suggested essay topics, to each of which would be appended several suggestions for additional reading. This was an occasion for these young prodigies to show off, by off-handedly mentioning the most recent and most recherché bits of scholarship. As each one pulled out another plum, the others nodded sagely and made some comment designed to show that they had just read it. I sat there with my game face on, frantically making surreptitious notes in an effort to remember some of the titles.

My biggest academic problem that first year, far more pressing than covering two thousand years of European history, was deciding what to call my new colleagues, who had for the past eight years been my professors. I couldn=t see myself addressing Quine as AVan@ and Aiken as AHenry.@ The department secretary, Ruth Allen, who had been with the department longer than all but the oldest senior professors, was casually familiar with the faculty, but her situation was the inverse of mine. She had met them when they were graduate students, and was not about to become deferentially formal just because they had been jumped up to professor status. I solved the problem for a long while by simply not addressing them directly at all, which made for some rather abrupt conversational openers. Finally, during a year when White was at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study, he asked me in a letter to call him AMorty.@ I never did call Demos ARaphael.@ He was by that time unimaginably old B indeed, he must have been almost as old as I am now.

Even though I was now earning an actual salary, complete with medical coverage and payments into the TIAA/CREF pension plan, I still could use some extra money, so I signed up to serve as a Freshman Advisor. One of my very first advisees was a pleasant young man who had attended the same mid-western high school as the logic phenom Saul Kripke. My advisee was no trouble at all, but Saul was a handful. He was, as we would say today, socially challenged, taking up a good deal of the time of the committee of House Senior Tutors who met regularly to deal with student problems. Marshall Cohen ran into one of the Senior Tutors who told of a long meeting they had just suffered through trying to sort out Saul's difficulties with a roommate. Marshall asked whether the Senior Tutors didn't resent having to spend so much time dealing with a Freshman, but his friend replied that he had been a member of the ground crew of a B-17 during the war. Each day, he said, as the B-17 limped back to base from a bombing mission, all shot up, his crew would run out onto the field and do whatever spot repairs they could, so that the bomber could go up the next day on another raid. "That is what we are doing," he said. "Our job is to get Saul back up in the air so that he can continue flying." That remark has stayed with me through the years as the epitome of dedicated teaching.

The next summer, my advisee invited me to dinner at his apartment, where he had taken up light housekeeping with a lovely Radcliffe girl. Saul was there as well. Saul's father was a Conservative Rabbi, and Saul had had a serious Jewish upbringing. As he talked, he *davanted*, which is to say he rocked back and forth vigorously. As he talked and *davanted* he ate, gesturing spastically, and as he talked and *davanted* and ate and gestured, his food scattered all over the table, as if to illustrate the law of entropy. With gentle understanding, the young Radcliffe student patiently swept the peas up from the table top and put them back on Saul's plate, where they stayed for a bit before being restrewn.

I have often wondered whether Saul, brilliant though he undoubtedly was, ever understood how much slack everyone was cutting him, from Quine on down. Somehow, I think not.

For the most part, I went my own way in the department. Harvard professors don't really advance much beyond what is called in child development books *Parallel play*.¹ No one attends anyone else's lectures, of course, and there is precious little socializing. When they encounter one another on campus, they resemble the dukes and counts at the medieval court of Burgundy, glorious and richly appointed and very formal. Each full professor proceeds in stately fashion, preceded like *Cyrano's* nose by his *vita*, trailing in his wake several Assistant Professors who exhibit the appropriate submissive body language.

But every so often, when things had so piled up that it was unavoidable, we had department meetings. I attended these with great anticipation, seized by what can only be described as a sublimated academic form of primal scene scopophilia, which is the term psychoanalysts use for the obsessive desire to see one's parents making love.

At almost the first meeting I attended, a dispute broke out between Quine and Aiken. The year before, apparently, one of Quine's doctoral student working jointly in Mathematics and Philosophy had been permitted to substitute one of the Mathematics qualifying examinations for the Preliminary Exam on Ethics. Now one of Aiken's students, working jointly in Philosophy and Art History, wanted to substitute an Art History exam for the Logic Prelim. Quine said flatly that it was out of the question. Aiken protested that by parity of reason [ordinarily a winning move in philosophical arguments] he should be allowed to make the substitution. Quine was adamant. Finally Aiken turned to Quine and said, *All right, Ledge, why not? What is the difference between Ethics and Logic?*² The answer is simple,³ Quine replied. *Ethics is easy*

and Logic is hard.@ Aiken was apoplectic but the substitution was disallowed.

Quite the most bizarre event that I have ever witnessed during *any* department meeting in forty-five years also occurred in that first year. Since this story is both an almost unbelievable tale and also a testament to the complexity of memory, it is worth spending some time on it.

It began simply enough when Donald Williams, one of the most senior members of the department, reported that he had heard from a man teaching Philosophy at a small school in Canada who had, some years earlier, been a doctoral candidate in the department. This man, who had served in the Canadian Air Force during World War II, had never finished his degree, but nevertheless had been teaching for some years. He had a wife and family, Williams said, and was now faced with a crisis. The little college at which he taught had decided to transform itself into a university status [something that was also happening on many campuses in the United States], and it had announced that in keeping with its new elevated status, it would require all faculty to have doctorates, *including those already on the faculty*. In short, if this man did not finish his degree forthwith, he would be fired. The poor man had sent some materials to Williams on ethical theory, in the hope that they would constitute a dissertation. [Ethics was not Williams' field, although he did actually publish an article on "The Meaning of 'Good'" in a major American journal, but the man had been away so long that he did not know the members of the department who did teach ethics.] The material was really just not acceptable, Williams said sadly.

"Well," we all replied, "surely he can revise it with some suggestions from you."
"Not a bit of it," Williams replied, "it simply does not have the [potential to be an acceptable dissertation."

What to do? We all scratched our heads, and looked glum, until a young Assistant Professor, Burton Dreben, spoke up. Dreben was Quine's protégé, a logician who had been a

Junior Fellow and had himself never earned a Ph. D. “Here is what we should do,” Dreben said. “I will move that this man be awarded the Ph. D. on condition that he never set foot in Cambridge, Massachusetts again. We will all close our eyes except Rod, and Rod will count the votes.” [This was Roderick Firth, Chair of the department – an upright Quaker of impeccable character]

We were all stunned, and looked at one another incredulously, but no one had an alternative suggestion, so in the end, Dreben made his motion, we closed our eyes and voted, and apparently enough people raised their hands, because Firth announced that the motion had passed.

This is the story as I have been telling it for fifty years, more or less as a corrective to the exaggerated respect that my Harvard Ph. D. in Philosophy sometimes evokes from people I meet. But having finished this memoir, I gave some thought to trying to have it published, and it occurred to me that even though all the participants save myself were, almost certainly, dead, nevertheless I really ought to try to confirm that my memory was accurate.

So one fine Spring day, Susie and I drove in to Cambridge from Western Massachusetts, and spent some time at the elegant underground library extension between Lamont and Houghton that serves as the storage for archives relating to Harvard itself. I had long since forgotten the man’s name, but after some searching through old lists of doctorates awarded, I found someone who seemed a likely candidate. He had graduated from a Canadian university in ’41, just before the war, and had been a student in residence in the Harvard Philosophy Department in the late 40’s and early 50’s.

Some web surfing located the school he had been teaching at, and some more probing revealed that this school had indeed transformed itself from a college into a university exactly when I recalled Williams coming before the department with his problem. So it seemed that I had

indeed found my man.

It remained only to take a look at the dissertation itself. On a second trip into Cambridge, I called for and was presented with the dissertation, which I read from cover to cover. Now, if the truth be told, it wasn't all that bad. It was totally without actual philosophical content, but it was very smoothly written, and had the requisite number of footnotes. There is no question at all that it would have been considered acceptable, if not distinguished, in the Columbia University Philosophy Department in which I served as a senior professor from 1964 to 1971, or in the University of Massachusetts Department of Philosophy in which I served from 1971 until my transfer to Afro-American Studies in 1992. But the Harvard department, at least in the fifties, held itself to a pretty high standard, and I could see why Williams despaired of guiding its author to a more acceptable product.

It remained only to check to see that Williams had indeed directed the dissertation. This required asking for the cover sheet, signed by the three members of the committee, which, although preserved in the archives, was separate from the dissertation itself. I submitted a call slip, and in time a librarian brought me the document. Sure enough, the Dissertation Director was Donald C. Williams, and his signature was there. The second reader was John Ladd, a young Assistant Professor visiting that year from Brown University who become a quite well known ethical theorists. The third reader was ... me! There was my signature, "Robert Paul Wolff."

I had not the slightest glimmer of a memory of ever having been in any way associated with the entire affair, save as a young, silent, passive observer. How on earth could I recall so many verifiable details of the matter, and yet completely forget that I was one of the readers of the dissertation? Had I even read the thing before affixing my name? I have no idea. Nevertheless, I think I can continue to say, when I meet someone with an unhealthy respect for a Harvard

doctorate, that it is not as hard as one might think to get one.

Who knows, maybe Sgt. McVicker had the right idea about Harvard Ph. D.=s.

The Harvard Department was struggling with a problem that seemed to grow worse with each passing year. Their very best students were simply not finishing the degree. Some of them, like Marshall Cohen and Bert Dreben, took the appointment to the Society of Fellows as an excuse for not actually writing a doctoral dissertation, much as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and McGeorge Bundy had done in earlier years. But this didn=t always work out for others as it had for them. Stanley Cavell had gone off after his Junior Fellowship to teach at the University of California, and out there, state law *required* the Ph. D. for anyone appointed to a tenured position. Thompson Clark was in the same boat, and there were a number of other top students who just seemed unable to finish up. This, I realized, was what had prompted Firth=s little chalk talk about rising abilities and soaring expectations. The problem was becoming an embarrassment to Quine and White, who were the dissertation directors of these non-performers, and a source of growing irritation to Williams, Aiken, and others whose best students were passed over for the coveted Junior Fellowships as well as for junior positions in the department, despite getting their degrees. Steve Barker was one case in point. He had done his work with Williams, who was not amused to see Steve passed over when Cavell and Cohen and Dreben were given the juiciest plums Harvard had to offer.

The whole matter came to a head in my second year as an Instructor B 1959-60. At long last, Tom Clark sent in a dissertation. Tom was considered by some to be one of the best students the department had ever enrolled, and the dissertation had been awaited eagerly for years. Morty White had directed it, but he was away at the Princeton Institute, so Quine and Williams were constituted as the committee. The dissertation was on perception. This is a

standard topic in the empiricist theory of knowledge, but in a rather odd fashion, Tom had drawn into the text little circles colored orange with crayon as examples of the surface of an orange.

Philosophy dissertations were not known by and large for full-color illustrations.

At the next meeting, Quine and Williams gave their opinions. Williams thought it had some good points, but also some problems. Quine said it was flatly unacceptable and should be rejected. We were all stunned. Everyone had simply assumed that a dissertation by Tom Clark would be an occasion for celebration. Williams remonstrated, but Quine stood firm. What to do?

It was finally decided that the entire department would read the dissertation, and sit as a committee of the whole. There were only two people let off the hook. I was excused because I was only an Instructor, and not senior enough to bear so heavy a burden. Jack Rawls was also out, because he was visiting from M. I. T., and would not actually join the department as a professor until two years later.

By the time we met next to decide the matter, White had weighed in with a letter strongly supporting the dissertation, but he wasn't there to take part in the discussion, a fact that had the effect of side-lining him. Quine and Williams had not changed their minds, but everyone else had an opinion and wanted to express it. Clark's principal defender, in White's absence, was his good friend Marshall Cohen, now an Assistant Professor of General Education and Philosophy. As the debate proceeded, things started to look bad for Clark. Quine was very persuasive, and since he was in the position of defending the most rigorous possible standards, he had the high ground.

Finally, in a moment of inspiration born of desperation, Cohen won over the waverers by arguing that Tom's dissertation ought to be accepted out of fairness because it was not as bad as

the worst dissertation the department had ever approved. This was certainly true, and enough votes were swung to give Clark the doctorate.

Stanley Cavell also finally finished up with an impressive Wittgensteinian thesis called *Must We Mean What We Say?*, later published by Cambridge University Press. Stanley had been a Junior Fellow also, having come to Harvard via Juilliard and the UCLA, if I remember correctly. He was very much a presence during the years I knew him in Cambridge, a burly, balding man with blond hair whose aura seemed to fill a good deal more space than his mere body. All of us looked forward with a slightly malicious anticipation to the moment when he and Rogers Albritton would first meet. They were equally brilliant, equally tortured and complicated, equally incapable of adopting or stating a philosophical position straight out, without doubling back on it, viewing it from an ironic distance, undercutting it, and then reaffirming it. But it was as though Rogers was Stanley turned inside out. The more Stanley expanded to fill all the available ego space, the more Rogers shrank into himself. It was a little as though Walt Whitman were to encounter Emily Dickinson.

The actual meeting was a bit of a letdown. I think they instantaneously recognized that neither would get a superior handhold on the other, and much in the manner of two chess grandmasters who find themselves in an opening that offers little opportunity for a win, they settled quickly for a draw.

Stanley and I got along, I guess, but I didn't like him. I was very young, very enthusiastic, desperately earnest. Stanley was, or at least affected to be, world-weary, ironical, and disillusioned. Once during my first graduate year, I stayed up all Saturday night thinking about the distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, which had first been articulated in that fashion by Kant and had recently been called into question by Quine. By dawn, I thought I

had achieved a breakthrough, and ran down to Adams House, where Stanley was having a languid Sunday breakfast with Tom Clark. I burst into the dining hall, rushed up to their table, and with barely a *Ahello@* started laying out my ideas. Stanley put up his hand, and drawled, *APlease*. Not before breakfast.*@*

My sole duties in the Department were to handle the surge of tutorials mandated by Harvard=s redefinition of its undergraduates. I taught Sophomore group tutorial and Junior group tutorial, and directed senior honors theses. Even though some of the students were very, very bright, and I have actually stayed in touch with a few up to the present day, I did not find the tutorial mode of teaching to my liking. Even then, I was something of a performer, and preferred standing in front of a full classroom.

It is worth mentioning, for the sake of the historical record, that in the academic year 1959-60, I had a slender, retiring young man in my Junior tutorial class who has gone on to achieve some prominence. David Souter was very smart, and my notes indicate that he did a quite commendable paper on C. I. Lewis= *Mind and the World Order*. The next year, I wrote a letter for David in support of his candidacy for a Rhodes Scholarship, which I believe he won. Since we are now all dependent on him to stand in the way of the egregious excesses of the current Administration and its appalling Attorney-General, I like to imagine that I had some small part in preparing him for that challenge.

Many years later, when Souter was elevated to the high court, he gave a speech in which he said, rather unexpectedly, that he would rather be lecturing on Proust. I was at that time the Director of a small humanities institute at the University of Massachusetts, so I wrote to him as his old tutor and invited him to give a lecture for us. I told him I hadn=t any idea what the going honorarium was for a Supreme Court Justice, but I thought we could certainly send a cord of

firewood to his Vermont home. He declined, and said mildly that a cobbler should stick to his last. Somehow, the forty years didn't seem to have changed him.

I wanted to teach a course in Philosophy before my Instructorship ran out, so in the late Fall of 1959, I called Donald Williams, who was acting as Chair in Rod Firth's absence, and asked him rather tentatively whether there was any chance of my offering a course in the department, next year perhaps. He thought not, but said he would get back to me. After a few days, he called and said that the department needed someone to teach the Kant course *the next semester*.

I was staggered. After I had stammered my agreement, I sat down to contemplate what this meant. I was to teach Philosophy 130, the famous Kant course, in the same room and from the same platform where Lewis had sat for all those years, guiding generations of philosophy students through the most important work of Philosophy ever written. Could I possibly teach a course that would in any way do justice to so great a tradition?

Naturally, I would use the Kant summary system. I wrote a note to Lewis, who was living in Menlo Park, California, telling him that I intended to use the system he had created. He wrote back a very nice reply, telling me that in fact he had learned the system of Kant Summaries from his professor, which, according to my calculation, meant that it had been devised by Josiah Royce or George Santayana. I went into what can only be described as panic overdrive, and started to prepare my lectures.

I was living then in Winthrop House, where I had secured a Resident Tutorship. This meant essentially that in return for a beautiful Harvard suite and free meals, I was to be available for Winthrop House students who wanted to talk to a professor. But at that moment the delights of House living were lost on me. My mind was totally absorbed by the need to prepare for

teaching the Kant course.

When I am trying to understand a great work of philosophy, I do not work as most scholars do. Indeed, what I do cannot really be called scholarship at all. The usual procedure is to go through a series of stages B first one reads the work itself. Then one reads secondary and peripheral writings by the same author. In the case of Kant, this would mean reading all of his other published works, then his letters, and then the unpublished manuscripts and scraps of paper that he left at his death B the so-called *Nachlass*. Thanks to the labors of generations of German scholars, all of this is beautifully collected into a multi-volume edition published by the Prussian Academy. Finally, one surveys the secondary literature, focusing especially on the most recent journal articles, where the latest scholarship tends to appear. Oh yes, and of course one reads Kant=s works in the original German.

Since I am writing my memoirs, I think it is time to come clean and confess certain things that will shock any Kant scholars who happen upon these words. When I wrote the book that established my reputation as a Kant scholar, I took none of the steps I have just laid out. Indeed, to this day, I have never read many of Kant=s minor published works. I read none of the letters, save the famous letter to Marcus Herz, most of which is reprinted in Norman Kemp-Smith=s magisterial commentary. I glanced briefly at the *Nachlass*, not even reading the *opus postumum* which serious Kant scholars think so important. And as for secondary literature, I was, to put it delicately, selective.

What is more, I worked in English, using Kemp-Smith=s translation, as Lewis had, and going to the German only for selected passages in which the precise wording made some major philosophical difference. Indeed B and this is perhaps more difficult to confess than any of my various venial and mortal sins B I cannot actually read German very well at all, certainly not well

enough to read the entire *Critique of Pure Reason*. God knows, I have tried, but I am seriously challenged when it comes to learning languages, and despite the flipping of countless word cards, I have never succeeded in making German a usable tool of research.

My approach is completely different. Since I had worked through the *Critique* in Lewis= course, and had then studied it carefully while writing my dissertation, I did not feel the need to read it straight through again, although by the time I was finished teaching the course and writing the book, I knew some portions of it virtually by heart.

Instead, I began by trying to figure out what Kant=s core philosophical problem is, and what central thesis he advances to deal with it. A great work of philosophy always grows out of some core problem, although sometimes the author himself cannot identify it or state it clearly. And every great work of philosophy has a central powerful thesis driving the argument. There will then be an elaborate network of definitions, distinctions, criticisms of predecessors, and the like, sometimes quite clever and often difficult to master. But none of that surface argumentation is very important, and it *never* matters if there are contradictions in it.

My job as commentator is twofold B first, to find that core problem and central thesis, and second, to discover an argument that can sustain the thesis, *even if the author never actually succeeds in articulating it in the text*. In effect, what I try to do is to make the great philosopher more perfect, more successful, than he actually was, by reconstructing, and if necessary even inventing, the argument as he *should* have stated it. Most great philosophers, I believe, have brilliant intuitions that they are only partially successful in bringing to the level of explicit expression. They *see* more than they can *say*. If my commentary is successful, it will *say* clearly what they have had the genius to *see*, and I will then be able to hold this idea up to readers and show it to them in all of its conceptual beauty.

This rather unorthodox method of textual commentary can succeed, needless to say, only on truly powerful texts. Secondary philosophical works, of the sort that most of us write, are all surface elaboration, and cannot stand up to the pressure of the sort of inquiry I am describing. Examined in this way, they will merely reveal, in the lovely words of Gertrude Stein, that there is no there there.

What makes the *Critique of Pure Reason* unique in the exclusive company of immortal works of philosophy is the fact that in it Kant seizes on *two or three* great ideas, not just one, and advances a beautifully interlocked complex of three or four great arguments. In the entire history of Western philosophy, there is not another work of which that can be said. The book is, of course, filled with endless definitions, distinctions, arguments, objections, and the like, any of which I and most other philosophers would be proud to have thought up. To understand the *Critique*, one must master all of them, so that they pose no obstacles to real understanding. But they do not in the end matter one bit. All that matters, all that justifies spending the enormous energy that the book demands, are those core ideas and driving arguments.

In preparing to stand on Lewis' platform and teach his course, the greatest philosophy course ever given anywhere, I set myself a task that no one before me had ever successfully accomplished. I sought to wrestle with the central passage of the book, the *Deduction*, and finally to extract from it in clear, simple, coherent fashion its central argument, which I would then be able to show actually did succeed in demonstrating his fundamental thesis.

I did not know any of this when I started preparing my lectures. It has taken me forty years of reflection and introspection to arrive at some understanding of the way my mind works. In the late Fall of 1959, all I knew was that come February, I was going to stand up in Emerson Hall, room F, and begin to lecture on Kant.

Twenty-six students turned out that Spring, including five graduate students and nine undergraduates who were or would be in my tutorial groups. The lectures were scheduled for Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at nine in the morning, but it had been a long time at Harvard since anyone had dared actually to meet on Saturdays. Tall, red-haired Tom Cathcart was there, and Owen de Long, and Carol Wolman. Tom and I have stayed in touch, and just last year he had a paper accepted by a philosophical journal, even though he is not a professional philosopher.

[This last sentence was written in 2004. Since then, Tom has had an astonishing success as an author. He and a friend co-wrote a wonderful collection of philosophical jokes called **Plato and a Platypus Walk Into Bar**. It has been a rave hit, and only two months ago, I found a copy of a French translation in a Parisian bookstore.]

Owen was going steady then with Jane Mansbridge, the daughter of the head of the American office of Cambridge University Press. Jane, or Jenny, as she now calls herself, has become an important feminist political theorist, teaching at the Kennedy School at Harvard. Carol Wolman will always stay in my mind because she was a tremendously gifted young woman living under the weight of an ambitious domineering mother who could not stand to share the limelight with her talented daughter. If Google is to be believed, Carol became a psychiatrist and has recently written a brilliant essay entitled *AI's the President Nuts? Diagnosing Dubya.*@

By the time I met the class that first day, I had already prepared several weeks of lectures, but I knew that they would all too rapidly be used up. Lewis's method called for reading anywhere from 40 to 60 pages of the *Critique* each week. Unfortunately for me, the most challenging portions of the book turn up quite near the front. By the beginning of the fifth week of the semester, I would be lecturing on the *Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding*. All the while, I was grading twenty-six papers each week, teaching my tutorial groups, and racing

through the history of Europe for the second time.

As the day approached for me to unfold the mysteries of the *Deduction*, I turned more and more into myself, running over the argument in my mind, telling to an imaginary audience the story of Kant's great discovery, doggedly refusing to rest so long as even a single step in the argument was unclear or incomplete. I can recall one evening walking for hours around the block on which Cindy's apartment was located, half speaking out loud to myself as though giving a lecture.

The assignment for that week was the shortest of the semester - only twenty-five pages in the Kemp-Smith translation B but it might as well have been a thousand pages, for in that passage Kant undertook to establish with *a priori* rigor the foundations of all human knowledge. By the time I finished my Thursday lecture, I still had a ways to go, so I told the students to show up at 9 a.m. that Saturday for an extra lecture. To my delighted astonishment, they did. Without any preliminaries, I launched into the last stages of my explication of Kant's argument, speaking without stop for an hour and a half. When I wrote the last line of my reconstruction on the blackboard, appending with a flourish *Q. E. D.*, the students burst into a spontaneous round of applause. That moment, coming so soon after I had begun to teach, was the high point of my entire career. I am glad to say that I realized it at the time.

The very next semester, I taught the course again. Another twenty-six students enrolled, including thirteen graduate students, among whom were several destined to become philosophical stars. Margaret Dauler became a very distinguished scholar of early modern philosophy, publishing under her married name, Margaret Wilson. Thomas Nagel is one of the best-known moral and political philosophers in America. For a time he taught at Princeton, but he now teaches both philosophy and law at NYU. Both of them earned A's, heading up an outstanding

group of students. Tom's summaries were a tad better, but Margaret wrote the best final exam in the class.

While I was plumbing the depths of Kant's philosophy and taking my Freshmen on a frantic dash through European history, I was also becoming involved in a quite different educational undertaking that had a far-reaching impact on my life and career. A number of very senior faculty at Harvard, with the enthusiastic encouragement of McGeorge Bundy, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, had been meeting for some time to plan a new interdisciplinary undergraduate major in Social Studies. It was to have a strong theoretical emphasis, grounded in the great tradition of European social thought in which Smith, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Freud, and Tocqueville were leading figures. Alexander Gerschenkron was representing Economics, Stanley Hoffmann Government, H. Stuart Hughes History, Lawrence Wylie Sociology, J. C. Pelzel Anthropology, Barrington Moore, Jr. The Russian Research Center, and Morton White had joined them from Philosophy. In 1959-60, when White went off to Princeton, he asked me to sit in for him in his absence.

During that year, the plans were completed, and with Bundy's help, the proposal secured the approval of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The idea was to cobble together existing courses from all of those departments, knitting the curriculum together with an array of Sophomore, Junior, and Senior tutorials and honors theses. Social Studies would begin with fifteen Sophomores divided into three tutorial groups of five students, each group to be co-taught by two faculty drawn from different departments. The only thing lacking was someone to administer the program.

Like many universities, Harvard had a habit of shoving onerous administrative duties on the most junior faculty available. The panjandrums on the planning committee were not about to

volunteer for the chore of actually recruiting students and scheduling tutorial sessions. As the only junior member of the committee, I was the natural choice. In late Spring, Bundy came to Winthrop House to have sherry and lunch with the Master and tutorial staff [even Winthrop, long known as the jock house, did what it could to keep up the English traditions.] When I walked into the Senior Common Room, where he was holding forth, Bundy looked up and said, AAh, here is the new Head Tutor of Social Studies. As he anticipated, I was pleased and flustered. This little display of his ability to affect the fate of eager young Instructors was characteristic of Bundy, who hid a steely concentration on the exercise of power behind a genial façade of unpretentiousness and informality.

As soon as I had been tapped to run Social Studies, I began the effort to recruit the fifteen Freshmen who would enter the program in the Fall to fill the first three tutorial groups. I taught the first group jointly with Barrington Moore, Jr., a tall, thin, aristocratic political sociologist who had made his reputation with several books on Soviet politics and society. Barry came from an old, upper crust New York family B his distant ancestor was the Clement Clark Moore who wrote A>Twas the Night Before Christmas, and his grandfather had been the Commodore of the New York Yacht Club. Barry and his wife, Betty, spent the summers on their yacht off the New England coast, sailing and working. In the winter they went to Alta to ski. Barry was apparently a champion skier, and his proudest boast, ranked in his mind far above whatever academic honors he might have achieved, was that he had once been invited to join the Alta ski patrol.

Barry was a Fellow of the Harvard Russian Research Institute, not a member of a regular department. I gathered that he had on several occasions been offered a professorship in Sociology, but as the talk shows say these days, he had Aissues with the Department, and

refused to accept the tenure that everyone else in Harvard Square lived and died for.

Our tutorial group met each Wednesday in my Winthrop House suite, F-25, from four to five in the afternoon. This was not tutorial for credit; each student was taking four regular courses. But Barry and I took no heed of such niceties. The reading for the first week was *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, by Adam Smith. But all of it!

One young man in the group came to see me after we had distributed the reading list, rather troubled. "How do you want us to read the Smith?" he asked. "Well," I said, "that is up to you, but if I were you, I would read it starting at the beginning and continuing to the end." "No, no," he went on, puzzled, "are we reading this for a test, or are we reading it for background?" "You are reading it because it is a brilliant and very influential book, and we think you will find it interesting." "But should I take notes?" "If you come across something interesting, and you think you might not remember it, you might make some notes. That is up to you." He went away very perturbed. I felt a certain sympathy for him. He had pretty obviously worked his head off to get into Harvard, making his parents very proud. He was prepared to do anything we asked, no matter how difficult. If I had told him to memorize the book while standing on his head, he would have had a go at it. The one thing his entire eighteen years of life had not prepared him for was a genuine educational experience of the sort that only a very rich school like Harvard could provide. In effect, the struggle to win admission to Harvard had ruined him for what it had to offer. The last time I looked, he was a defense intellectual, working at a think tank, which somehow seems appropriate.

Emmy Schröder was quite another story. Tall, beautiful, brilliant, and utterly unconventional, Emmy turned up a few years later toi-toing with Tom Mboya in Kenya. Eventually, she married a Jamaican and lived there for many years, doing fascinating work on the

linguistics of Jamaican English. Now she has made herself an expert on the ancient civilizations of the Euphrates and Tigris valleys.

Barry and I fell into a teaching style that might be described as academic tag team wrestling. He would lead off, pressing the students with penetrating questions, probing to find out whether they actually understood the reading. When he tired a bit, I would jump in and pick up where he had left off, leading the discussion away from sociology and economics and into philosophy and political theory. By the end of an hour, the students would be wiped out, but Barry and I would be all pumped up and ready to go another round.

The two of us went right through the year that way, moving on from Smith to Mill's *Political Economy*, a selection of Marx's writings, de Tocqueville's *Ancien Regime and the French Revolution*, Tyler's *Primitive Culture*, Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* and *New Introductory Lectures*, Durkheim's *Suicide*, three hundred pages of Max Weber, Collingwood's *Idea of History*, and Whitehead's *Modes of Thought*. We were insane, of course. The syllabus would have taxed the talents and energies of a group of graduate students, and these five kids were barely eighteen or nineteen. It was, without a doubt, one of the greatest Sophomore courses ever offered anywhere.

Barry and I hit it off immediately, even though we were about as unlike as two people could be. I found Barry astonishingly erudite, with a breadth of learning that I knew would forever be beyond me. His theoretical understanding of the world was immensely strengthened by his Marxist conceptual framework, which was subtle, flexible, and completely undogmatic. I realized that my earlier offhand dismissal of Marx's economic theories was an expression of a shallow incomprehension, and although it would be almost twenty years before I came fully to understand the power, penetration, and scope of *Das Kapital*, I began that education by sitting in

Winthrop F-25 and listening to Barry Moore question a little group of Sophomores.

One of Barry's closest friends was Herbert Marcuse, who was then teaching at Brandeis. Barry and Herbert had met during the war, when they both worked in Washington in Army intelligence. Barry was on the Russian desk and Herbert was on the German desk in Wild Bill Donovan's operation. These wartime friendships went very deep, and there were people on the Harvard faculty with bitterly opposed political views who nonetheless maintained warm personal relationships because of them.

One evening, Barry and Betty invited me to dinner at their lovely Cambridge home to meet Marcuse. As soon as Herbie found out that I was writing a book on Kant, our friendship was assured. There is a long European tradition of respect for philosophy as a discipline B a tradition not shared by Americans, unfortunately B and in the left intellectual world from which Marcuse came, Kant took pride of place above all other philosophers, even Plato or Aristotle or Hegel. To be a Kant scholar, I discovered, was to be offered immediate entrée to any circle of European scholars or intellectuals. Years later, when I gave a lecture on Mill at Columbia, Hannah Arendt came up afterwards to say hello. She pretty obviously hadn't thought much of the lecture, but she asked politely what I was working on at the moment. When I said I was writing a commentary on Kant's *Grundlegung*, she smiled and said, AAh yes, it is so much nicer to spend time with Kant. @

Almost immediately, Herbie and I got into a wild argument about the *Critique*, citing passages and talking Kant jargon while Barry and Betty looked on with amusement. Somehow, the dispute came around to contemporary analytic philosophy, for which Marcuse had only contempt. He made a scathing reference to Athe present king of France is bald, @ a little example Quine used in one of his most famous essays to illustrate a point about truth and reference. The

problem Quine was discussing by means of this example is actually an old and very important one, featured prominently in a number of medieval debates. I leapt to Quine's defense, and the two of us went at it pretty hot and heavy. I argued that Quine was doing a brilliant job of making an obscure and difficult matter clear. Then Marcuse stunned me by saying, "In philosophy, unclarity is a virtue."

At least, that is what I thought he said. Marcuse had a thick German accent, and I could not be absolutely certain I had heard him correctly. "Did you say that in philosophy unclarity is a virtue?" I was afraid I had stumbled into *Alice in Wonderland*. "Yes," Marcuse replied, with that malicious smile that I came to know quite well in later years. "You are saying that in philosophy, it is a good thing not to be clear?" I asked incredulously. "Yes," he said with an air of self-satisfaction.

For those who are familiar with Marcuse's writings, I need to explain that the conversation took place while he was writing his greatest work, *One-Dimensional Man*. When it was finally published three years later, I realized what he had meant by this apparently quixotic statement. In a nutshell, Marcuse believed that the surface clarity of behavioral social science was a repressive maneuver designed to rob speech of its liberatory potential [like many German intellectuals, he confused operationalism in American sociology with logical analysis in American philosophy]. This is one of the deepest insights in a complex and powerful book, but that evening, all I knew was that this charming, charismatic old man was manifestly nuts.

Marcuse had one more joke to play on me. Four years later, when I was teaching at Columbia, I got a call from Barry. He and Herbert had gone to Beacon Press with a proposal for a little book consisting of an essay Barry had written on objectivity in social science and Herbert's chapter on "repressive tolerance" that had never made it into *One Dimensional*

Man. Arnold Tovell, the marvelously supportive editor at Beacon, told them that they would need at least three essays, so they wanted me to write something on tolerance to round out the book.

Needless to say, I was thrilled. What could possibly beat co-authoring a book with Barrington Moore, Jr. and Herbert Marcuse? They never bothered to send me their essays, and I actually had nothing to say about tolerance, but I set to work, hit on a way to tie my critique of liberalism to the concept of tolerance, and wrote an essay called *Beyond Tolerance*. Then the three of us got together in Tovell's office to talk about a title for this rather slender volume. We kicked it around for a while until Marcuse, with a malicious grin, looked at me and said, *Let's call it A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. I was horrified. >Herbert, I said, *We can't do that. I have just published a book on the Critique of Pure Reason. If I put my name on a book called A Critique of Pure Tolerance, I will be laughed out of the profession*. But Marcuse won the day with an argument that none of us could refute. *Don't worry,* he said. *Nobody will ever read it.*

At first it looked as though Herbert was right. Beacon decided to try an experiment. In those days, reviewers only paid attention to hardcover books. Paperbacks were sold from racks in candy stores and at train stations. Tovell thought he could have the best of both worlds if he published the book as a paperback-sized hardcover. He figured that it would be reviewed like a hardcover but would be put in train station racks and sell like a paperback. Unfortunately, he got it backwards. Nobody reviewed it, because it wasn't a full sized book, and nobody put it in racks at train stations because it had a hard cover.

But that was not to be the end of the story. Student riots broke out in Germany and France, where Rudi Dutschke and Daniel Cohn-Bendit were bigger than the Beatles. The French

and German students read translations of *One-Dimensional Man* and elevated Marcuse to the status of a hero of the revolution. Anything with his name on it was a sure winner. Our little volume went into translation, and immediately became a phenomenal seller in Europe.

Meanwhile, students were beginning to make their moves in America, and they too fixed on Marcuse as a role model. They didn't actually *understand* him, but with unerring instinct, they recognized him as a soul mate. Seizing the day, Tovell brought out a new printing of *Critique of Pure Tolerance*, this time in a normal sized hardcover edition with a simultaneous paperback version. In the first three years of its existence, our book had sold slightly more than four thousand copies. In the first year of its new incarnation, it sold more than twenty-six thousand.

Barry, Betty, Cynthia, and I remained close friends for many years. In 1970, when our second son was born, Cynthia and I named him Tobias Barrington Wolff. Barry agreed to be Toby's godfather, and gave him a toothmarked little silver cup that had been in the Moore family for generations. I was actually written into Barry's will at one point as his literary executor, but when my twenty-three year marriage to Cynthia ended in 1985, Betty and Barry interpreted the break as a call to choose sides, and I lost all contact with them.

Although my teaching absorbed a great deal of time and effort, it was not the primary focus of my emotional energies during my years as a Harvard Instructor. More and more as time passed, I became caught up in intense political debates and activities. The first issue that engaged me was the burgeoning campaign to put some sort of limitation on nuclear weapons. I had been concerned for some time about the dangers of nuclear proliferation and the threat of an accidental nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union. I even made reference to the subject in my letters home from Europe. Younger readers, who have lived their entire lives in the shadow of nuclear weapons may find it hard to understand how urgent and overwhelming these

threats appeared to those of us who were living through the first years of the nuclear standoff.

What frightened many of us was the danger of a miscalculation or misunderstanding leading to a full-scale exchange of nuclear weapons that would kill hundreds of millions of people and quite possibly end civilization as we knew it. A few words about the technical situation are needed to explain why we were so terrified. The weapons themselves, of course, were horrific. By the end of the fifties, both countries had large stockpiles of thermonuclear bombs, each of which had an explosive power equivalent to several millions of tons of TNT. By way of comparison, in the run-up to America's invasion of Iraq, the Army tested a huge bomb, dubbed *The mother of all bombs*, carrying twenty thousand pounds of explosive. When it was dropped on an uninhabited portion of an island, it made the ground shake for miles around. That bomb, intended to frighten the Iraqi army into submission, had roughly one thousandth the explosive power of the atomic bombs dropped by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and one millionth the power of the bombs in the American and Soviet arsenals. Nuclear weapons were more properly considered forces of nature than weapons of war. One of them could effectively obliterate a city the size of New York.

Initially, the thermonuclear warheads were loaded onto B-52 intercontinental bombers, which formed the backbone of the Strategic Air Command. Bombers are quite vulnerable when on the ground, which meant that if there were a crisis of some sort, Air Force protocol called for scrambling the crews and getting them up in the air as fast as possible, positioned at a forward point near the Russian border. But these planes could be kept aloft only for a limited number of hours before they had to be brought back for refueling, and even with mid-air refueling, the needs of the crews necessitated periodic landing. As soon as the bombers were down, they were vulnerable again. Should an international crisis, real or imagined, result in fleets of U. S. bombers

circling near the Soviet border, and fleets of Soviet bombers circling near the U. S. Borders, it would take very little in the way of misunderstanding or miscalculation to trigger mutual attacks that would effectively destroy both nations. No one could even calculate the indirect effects of that much radioactive material being carried by jet streams across the face of the globe.

The experience with aerial bombing in World War II had made it clear that no defense could possibly hope to achieve a kill rate of as much as fifty percent of an attacking force of airplanes. But simple calculation made it obvious that even ninety percent success against a fleet of bombers armed with hydrogen bombs would be a catastrophe.

The next generation of weaponry B intercontinental ballistic missiles B made the situation even worse. The great attraction of missiles is that they are totally unstoppable and almost instantaneous by comparison with bombers. An IBM would take minutes to travel from the United States to Russia, and nothing could knock it down once it had been launched. But the first IBMs developed were fueled by chemically unstable liquid fuel. After it had been pumped into the rockets, it had to be used quickly or pumped out again. Since it took hours for the pumping process to be carried out, if the fueled rockets were not launched, but were unfueled, there was a risk that they would be blown up on the ground. The only saving grace was that the missiles were not terribly accurate, which meant that they could not be counted on to hit enemy missile installations. So they were aimed at enemy cities, which the Air Force could be pretty confident of destroying. These facts triggered a secret race between Russia and America to develop more accurate missiles, hardened missile silos, and solid fuels that did not have to be pumped into the rockets and pumped out again.

Nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles posed a problem for the military entirely new in the history of warfare. No one had ever fought a war using them; indeed, no one

had even test fired an IBM with a live nuclear warhead. What was more, the only rational national goal was to avoid a nuclear war, not to win one. Under these conditions, experience, which was the principal strength of the generals and admirals, was worthless.

Into the gap opened up by this unique situation stepped a horde of civilians who claimed to know better than the generals how to plan for nuclear war. Leading the pack were economists, who argued that their techniques for analyzing the competition between two firms in the marketplace was just what the Defense Department needed. They were followed by mathematicians, sociologists, physicists, anthropologists, philosophers, and psychologists. Among the most prominent of these new Defense Intellectuals, as they came to be called, were a brilliant economist in the Harvard Economics Department, Thomas Schelling, and a pretentious gasbag of a pseudo-physicist named Herman Kahn, located at the Rand Corporation. In 1960, Kahn published a big, fat book called *On Thermonuclear War* [a bow to von Clausewitz's famous work], in which he purported to show that a vigorous civil defense could enable the United States to prevail in a nuclear war with an acceptable level of dead Americans somewhere in the neighborhood of twenty million or so, if the wind was blowing in a favorable direction that day.

The more I learned about America's weaponry and its policies for dealing with them, the more convinced I became that the only sane response was some form of nuclear disarmament. I was hardly alone, needless to say. Many of the most distinguished physicists throughout the world, including some who had participated in the invention of the first nuclear weapons, began to speak publicly about the necessity of a negotiated reduction in the weapons, leading to a complete dismantling of the arsenals being created by Russia and the United States. In 1955, Bertrand Russell led an attempt to bring together physicists from both sides of the Iron Curtain to talk

about steps toward nuclear disarmament. Eventually, in July 1957, the first of what became a series of yearly conferences took place in the town of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, underwritten by a wealthy businessman, Cyrus Eaton. The Pugwash Conferences, as they came to be called, were for some years the focus of the international Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It was as a consequence of one of the Pugwash Conferences, albeit indirectly, that I learned a lesson that has stayed with me up to the present time.

I had become friendly with Richard Barnet, a young lawyer at the Russian Research Institute who had made himself an expert on the legal aspects of disarmament. In 1960, I think it was, Walt W. Rostow, later Johnson's National Security Advisor, returned from the Pugwash Conference and gave television interviews in which he parroted the standard propaganda line of the American government B that Russians did not really want disarmament, could not be trusted, and so forth. Barnet invited me to a closed briefing at the Institute for Harvard's Russian scholars, and I jumped at the chance to find out what experts *really* thought, what they said to one another behind closed doors. Everyone was there B Alex Inkeles, Adam Ulam, Zbigniew Brzezinski, all the hotshots. I listened with dismay as Rostow used the same hackneyed jargon that had characterized his public appearances. Worse still, the responses from the experts were couched as well in the cold war boilerplate. It dawned on me that this was the way they actually thought. There was no *real* insider story that they shared only with fellow experts. I think of this experience now as I listen to Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and Condaleeza Rice mouth manifest nonsense about their invasion of Iraq.

My first foray into the public debate was a letter to the *New York TIMES* on September 25, 1959. Nikita Khrushchev had come to the United Nations to propose General and Complete Disarmament in four years. The western press and the American Government hooted in derision

at the very idea of complete disarmament, and dismissed his proposal without the slightest serious consideration. I was furious, and wrote a letter questioning whether America actually wanted disarmament, its public professions to the contrary notwithstanding. I suggested that whereas Marx had said that capitalism thrived on war, he would, if he were alive today, suggest that capitalism now thrived on the preparation for war.

The response was extraordinary B one more evidence of the enormous reach of the *TIMES* and the newsworthiness of the Harvard name.. I got lovely letters from old socialists in New York, blessing me for speaking out; several sober response to my letter were published in the next week; and the right wing hatemonger George Sokolsky devoted an entire column to denouncing me as unfit to teach the young. I was thrilled.

Over the next two years, I devoted more and more of my time and energy to the struggle to arouse Americans to the dangers of nuclear war. I appeared on local television, spoke at churches and synagogues, debated Thomas Schelling on the Harvard campus, and in early 1961 wrote a long attack on Kahn=s book that appeared as the cover story in *The New Republic*. I even debated Kahn in person before a large audience at Jordan Hall in Boston. Perhaps the oddest gig produced by my involvement in the campaign was an invitation to make a presentation to Henry Kissinger=s seminar on international relations and defense policy.

Kissinger was not a new-style defense intellectual. He was actually an old-fashioned diplomatic historian, whose early work had been on Bismarck. But he was very ambitious, and had the wit to jump on a bandwagon as it was passing by. He had written a rather facile and superficial book called *The Necessity for Choice* which stole liberally from *On Thermonuclear War* and was transparently designed to catch the attention of John Kennedy, then running hard for the presidency. In his ponderous Germanic manner, he dismissed pro-disarmament types like me

as insufficiently aware of the enormous profundity of the issues, stating in a letter to the Harvard *Crimson* that this was all a very serious and difficult subject. @

Because of my background in logic and mathematics, I was able without too much trouble to master the formal materials derived from Game Theory and Bargaining Theory that Schelling, Morton Halperin, Albert Wohlstetter and others used to give some aura of scientific precision to their speculations. When I showed up at Kissinger's office on the day of the seminar, I asked whether there was a blackboard in the room. Kissinger wanted to know why I needed one, so I explained that I was going to put some Game Theory matrices on the board, as a focus of my critique of Kahn and Schelling. Kissinger, of course, understood not a word of Game Theory or Bargaining Theory, and he suggested nervously that there was no need to go into such things. Rather maliciously, I insisted, pointing out that this was a very serious and difficult subject. @

As I became more and more involved in the disarmament movement, I began to link up with the many other people in the Harvard community who shared my anxieties. In response to my *TIMES* letter, David Riesman, recently appointed the first Ford Professor of the Social Sciences, wrote me a congratulatory note and invited me to stop in to see him on the top floor of Emerson Hall. When I diffidently poked my head into his office, asking whether I was disturbing him, he gestured broadly for me to come in. That's the trouble with this place, @ he complained. No one talks to anyone else. I am right down the hall from Mr. Sociology [he meant Talcott Parsons] and I have never had a conversation with him. @

Riesman had the habit of taking up young people, more or less like the Boston Amorys, and I suddenly found myself receiving copies of every memorandum and letter that he wrote to anyone on the Harvard campus. He and a number of others, including the grand old pacifist A. J. Muste and the brilliant, eccentric psychoanalytic theorist Erik Erikson, were reviving the

Revolutionary War tradition of Committees of Correspondence. I began attending their meetings, and published several essays in their Newsletter. Riesman was open and accessible, almost to a fault, but I found Erikson rather distant, and never established any sort of real relationship with him.

The liveliest circle of critics and activists, of which I became a charter member, was a small group of graduate students and young faculty that took to calling itself *The New Left Club of Cambridge*, in ironic imitation of its English prototype. We weren't really a club, just some like-minded men and women who enjoyed hanging out together and talking politics. For the year that I ran Social Studies, we used to meet in my office for a bag lunch every week or so.

The group included Gabriel and Joyce Kolko, Steven and Abigail Thernstrom, Gordon Levin, Michael Walzer, Nadav Safran, and on occasion H. Stuart Hughes, although Hughes was rather older than the rest of us. Martin Peretz joined the group, as did Michael Maccoby.

Gaby and Joyce were wonderful old-fashioned radicals, already doing the first-rate research that eventually resulted in Gaby's fine 1962 book, *Wealth and Power in America*. I have taught the book many times over the years, until my copy is tattered and held together with scotch tape. What can I say about Steve and Abby? Steve was a graduate student in History, doing the research on the New England working class in the eighteenth century that made his reputation and won him tenure at Harvard. The two of them were tigers when it came to political issues, stepping out front on a number of progressive causes. I have no idea why they have turned sour, bitter, and reactionary, although I once heard a rumor that it was somehow connected with the fact that Steve became an object of student criticism during the Harvard troubles of the late sixties and early seventies.

Marty Peretz was essentially a young wannabe, trying to latch onto what looked to him

then to be a group of comers. Marty had been an undergraduate student of Max Lerner at Brandeis, who wrote a regular column for the New York *Post*, and he actually traveled around the country arranging for the syndication of Lerner=s column.

Mike Walzer was a sweet, soft-spoken lovely man, the fair-haired boy of Louis Hartz and the political theorists in the Government Department. His earliest work was on the political theories of English Puritans during the Revolution of 1640. He was awarded tenure at Harvard and then moved to a professorship at the Institute for Advanced Study, where he is today. I liked Mike enormously, and thought that he and I were kindred spirits. He told me once that when his first child was a little baby and teething, he would walk up and down the apartment carrying her on his shoulder and patting her, trying to soothe her. To keep himself awake, he would open up a picture book of Marilyn Monroe and lay it on the dining room table, allowing himself one page turn for every complete tour of the apartment.

Some years later, during the cries for Nixon=s impeachment in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, I was called in Northampton by a young political scientist in New York who told me that a group of political scientists were trying to raise the money to take a full page ad in the *TIMES*. He wanted to know whether I could help him reach Barry Moore or Marty Peretz for contributions. I told him to forget about Barry B like many upper class types with inherited money, Barry was quite stingy when it came to giving it away. But I was pretty sure I could reach Marty through Mike. I called Mike, exchanged pleasantries, and then explained why I was calling. There was a long pause at the other end of the line. Very softly, Mike said, Awell.... you see we are supporting Nixon.@ I was so astonished that I exploded, asking him what on earth he was talking about. There was an even longer pause. Then, in a sweet, sad voice, almost as though he were describing something being done to him, rather than something he was doing, he

said, very hesitantly, AWell... you see ... Israel.@

I was so embarrassed for him that I got off the phone as fast as I could, and never talked to him again. Ever since that time, it has seemed to me that Mike=s work, whatever its ostensible subject, is really about Israel. Freud says somewhere, talking about the conduct of a psychoanalysis, that if there is any subject that it is not permitted to discuss freely in an analysis, sooner or later the entire analysis comes to be about that subject.

The wackiest episode of the New Left Club of Cambridge was our flirtation with Erich Fromm, the émigré fugitive from the Frankfort School of Social Research. Fromm was living in Mexico, and Mickey Maccabee had been in touch with him. Somehow, Mickey had managed to give Fromm the impression that there was a large mass of budding socialists up north just waiting for a charismatic leader to transform them into a political powerhouse. Mickey arranged for Fromm to come to Cambridge, and our little handful dutifully turned out to hear him speak. Fromm was obviously dismayed by the size of his army, and lacking the staying power of a Stalin or a Lenin, turned tail and headed south again.

As the 1960 presidential campaign heated up, everyone at Harvard became very excited, needless to say. We were all fanatic Kennedy supporters. After all, he was a Harvard man, his wife spoke French, and he had won a Pulitzer Prize [even if the book that won for him was, as it later became clear, written by Ted Sorenson.] I ran into Barry Moore on the campus one day and gushed a bit about the race. He looked at me from a height as much intellectual as physical and observed that there was not the slightest bit of difference between Kennedy and Nixon. It took me many years to realize that he was quite right.

As election day approached, the Winthrop House Senior Common Room chipped in to rent a television set, and we all gathered to watch the results. This was before the days of exit

polls and projections, so we knew it might be a long night. Things were nip and tuck for hours, until at two a.m. the Illinois figures, which had been frozen for hours, began to change. In a successful bid for influence in the new administration, Richard Daley was making his move. Precincts were discovered in Chicago that had mysteriously failed to report earlier, graveyards were voted, and Illinois swung to Kennedy. Finally, as the sun was coming up, we all went to Hayes-Bickford=s for breakfast and then returned to watch Nixon=s concession speech.

The long boring sleep of the Eisenhower era was over. There were moments when it seemed as though all of Cambridge was leaving for jobs in the new administration. I was not intimate with the really important people who were tapped for senior positions, but a number of my friends were leaving for junior slots. Dick Barnet went to the recently formed Disarmament Agency. My colleague from the Senior Common Room, Barbara Bergmann, with whom I had spent some pleasant hours playing string quartets, snagged a job on the staff of the Council of Economic Advisors. Dick=s friend, Marc Raskin [who actually knew Susie from Chicago, as I learned thirty years later] was appointed as aide to McGeorge Bundy, who became Kennedy=s National Security Advisor. Poor Henry Kissinger never got the call, despite the fact that *The Necessity for Choice* could be seen on Kennedy=s desk in a television documentary about the transition.

And then, on Sunday, April 16, 1961, just three months after Kennedy took office, a group of Cuban exiles armed, trained, and funded by the C. I. A., mounted a disastrous effort to invade Cuba via the Bay of Pigs and depose Fidel Castro.

The abortive Cuban invasion hit the New Left Club of Cambridge very hard. We had all thought of ourselves as liberals. Now Kennedy was a liberal, if anyone was, and he had invaded Cuba. That meant that we weren=t liberals. What then were we? We took to calling ourselves

radicals, but that was just a place holder, a way of indicating that whatever liberals were, we weren't *that*.

We had had indications that something of this sort was planned under the Eisenhower administration. In fact, we had met with McGeorge Bundy the previous Fall, after he returned from a fact-finding tour of Latin America. He looked us straight in the eye and lied to us, assuring us that the reports in the *Nation* of C. I. A. training camps for anti-Castro Cubans were untrue. But by the time the invasion took place, he was in settled into the Executive Office Building, serving as National Security Advisor.

Within days of the abortive invasion, we had mobilized ourselves and were organizing to protest the attempts by the United States to overthrow the Castro government. On the evening of April 26, 1961, just ten days after the invasion, we held a protest rally at Harvard chaired by Stuart Hughes, Nadav Safran, and myself. Despite being somewhat upstaged by undergraduates protesting Harvard's decision to stop printing its diplomas in Latin, we managed to pull a big crowd, and because of the Harvard/Kennedy connection, we got considerable press coverage. At the meeting, we formed the Cuba Protest Committee, which then circulated a statement for signatures by faculty at Harvard and elsewhere. We collected two dozen signatures from senior Harvard faculty, including Barry Moore and Rod Firth.

The attempt to round up signatures was an instructive exercise. A number of very senior, supposedly savvy social scientists declined to sign, saying that they preferred to talk privately to Bundy. They suffered from the rather common misapprehension that their Harvard friendship would give them access to the inner circles of government. Some years later, during the Viet Nam War, the same notion led Harvard professors to think that their faculty friendship with Kissinger during his Harvard days would give them special access. Seymour Hirsch, in his

splendid book *Kissinger*, skewers that delusion. The professors would come to see Kissinger and he would play them like mandolins, assuring them that he was the only person protecting the world from Nixon=s craziness. As soon as they left, convinced they had whispered in the right ear of power, he would forget about them. What really worried Kissinger, Hirsch wrote, were the clueless outsiders picketing in front of the White House. Since he couldn=t control them, they constituted a threat.

Our protests had no visible effect on the Kennedy Administration, but they did produce yet another *contretemps* with Robert Lee Wolff. By now, Wolff was Chair of the History Department, and even more full of himself. In the aftermath of the protest rally, a large number of young Cuban artists and poets sent me a telegram of congratulations. By mistake, it was delivered to Robert Lee Wolff, who was apoplectic at being taken for a left-wing anti-government protestor. He sent the telegram to me with a curt note that read, AKindly tell your Cuban friends to take me off their mailing list.@

Wolff also called me to express his distress at the confusion. As it happened, the night before I had attended the annual dinner of the Winthrop House Senior Common Room, held in the dining room of the Society of Fellows. One of the tutors, Bill Polk, a Middle Eastern expert who was descended from President Polk, had just returned from a research trip overseas. Bill had used his entire duty free liquor allowance B in those days the equivalent of four bottles B to bring back an enormous Jereboam of brandy, which traveled up and down the dinner table all evening on an elegant silver Sherry trolley. For one of only three times in my life, I got drunk.

The next morning, when Wolff called, I was in no condition for polite repartée. Wolff protested that this confusion between the two of us was becoming absolutely intolerable. I replied that it was caused by the fact that he was a famous professor while I was as yet quite

unknown. I assured him that I was trying as fast as possible to rectify that. He let out a strangled sound and finally closed the conversation by saying, in an almost imploring voice, AWell, for God=s sake, don=t marry a woman named Mary!@ I collapsed in helpless laughter, because of course Cindy=s first name *was* Mary.

Wolff had the last laugh. Several years later, when Cindy and I had returned to Cambridge so that I could spend a visiting year at Wellesley, Cindy won a doctoral fellowship from the American Association of University Women. Before leaving for Europe for a summer vacation, she asked them to deposit the first half of the fellowship in our Cambridge Trust Company bank account. Sure enough, Robert Lee Wolff also banked there, and the money was deposited to *his* account. It took us some while, when we returned, to sort things out. He claimed never to have noticed the sudden increase in his bank balance.

As soon as I finished my doctoral dissertation, I was overtaken by the fear that I would never manage to write anything again. I do not know what recess of my mind this fear springs from, but I have experienced it each time I have finished writing a book. As soon as I got out of the Army, I made some attempts to place portions of the thesis as journal articles, and actually succeeded in two cases. But my father had instilled in me the deep-rooted belief that it was books that counted. I toyed with the idea of writing something on the philosophy of history, growing out of the thought I had had while teaching Soc Sci 5 that there was an interesting methodological or epistemological contrast to be drawn between the reasoning of a medievalist like Henri Pirenne, who had far too little data to work with, and a student of the French Revolution like Georges Lefebvre or Alfred Cobban, who had far too much. But nothing concrete came of it.

Then I taught the Kant course, accumulating three fat binders of lecture notes along the way. When the course finally ended in Late May, I decided to write a commentary on the

Transcendental Analytic of the *Critique*. I was going to try to capture on paper my revolutionary reconstruction of Kant's central argument. As soon as my grades were in and my tutees had left, I sat down at my desk in Winthrop House and began to write. The mind represses the memory of pain, so that after a terrible trauma like childbirth, a mother can consider getting pregnant again. This no doubt has great survival value for the species. I think I have a similar psychic mechanism for writing. On Sept. 11, 1959 I wrote home to my parents, "God, how I hate to write, and love to publish." Yet once the pain of writing has faded from memory, and only the printed page remains, I go right back to it.

Once again, I wrote in longhand on sheets of paper, counting the words at the end of each day and noting them obsessively in the text. Some of the writing went easily, as I transformed my lecture notes into fully formed sentences and paragraphs, but as I dug deeper into the underlying structure of Kant's argument, I encountered a problem. Even in my reconstruction, Kant's argument was so complex that I could not lay it out clearly and transparently in one unbroken line of exposition. There was just too much for the reader to grasp. I puzzled over this problem, and finally hit upon a solution. Instead of stating Kant's argument once, I presented it in five stages of evolution. In each stage, a new element of the final argument was introduced. Then I explained in what ways this version of the argument was unsatisfactory, and introduced a new element to clear it up. This led to a second statement of the argument. Continuing in this fashion, I exhibited the full argument as growing organically in a succession of stages, each one more complex than the one before, until with the fifth stage, the full-scale argument in all its power and subtlety could be presented in a form that was immediately comprehensible to the reader. In the book as it was finally published by Harvard University Press in 1963, my explication of the twenty-five pages of Kant's *A*Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding fills one

hundred four pages. Those pages cost me more labor and took me more deeply into the foundations of philosophy than anything else I have ever written.

When I had completed my handwritten draft of that section of the book, I showed it to Cindy with excitement and trepidation. Cindy was ferociously smart, but she had no head for philosophy. She had never read a word of Kant, or of any other philosopher, so far as I could tell, and she could not easily understand what I had written, a fact that made her intensely uncomfortable. When she put down the sheets of paper, she laughed nervously and said, "Nobody believes that." I put on my game face, but I was secretly very hurt. Readers of the book have for forty years remarked on the charm of the dedication, which reads, "For Cindy, who laughed." Until now, only I have known the pain behind those words.

By the end of the summer, I had written most of a draft of the book, but I set it aside to attend to Social Studies, tutorials, and all the other duties of a very junior Instructor. Firth had made it clear when I began the Instructorship that it was not renewable, so once again I was on the job market. Nelson Goodman remembered me from the time ten years earlier when I had taken his course as a Freshman, and invited me to apply for a position at Penn. On a rainy Fall day, I took the train to Philadelphia to read a paper on the Deduction and be interviewed. The paper went all right, I guess, though the energy level in the room would have been more appropriate for a wake. But at the little dinner beforehand, I blew the job without even realizing it. The conversation turned to General Education, and thinking that this was my chance to shine, I expatiated on the Harvard program and my great pleasure at being offered the opportunity to range so far afield from Philosophy. Alas, Goodman was a sworn enemy of General Education, so the job possibility was dead before I even gave my paper.

Bundy wanted me to be kept on at Harvard so that I could continue to run Social Studies.

He even offered the Philosophy Department half of an Assistant Professorship if they would provide the other half, but despite the efforts of White, who was back from the Institute, the Department wasn't buying. They had seen first Wang, then Dreben, then Cohen, and finally Cavell get Assistant Professorships, and they didn't want yet another Quine or White protégé foisted on them. I told Rogers Albritton that I had most a book written on Kant, and asked him whether he thought the members of the Department would like to look at it. He thought for a long minute, and then said simply, "No." Had he stayed in Cambridge, Bundy might have managed to arrange something, but by then he was in Washington approving the invasion of Cuba.

In the end, it was Demos who came through. Donald Meiklejohn at Chicago wrote to ask him whether he knew a young philosopher who could teach in the big Sophomore Social Sciences course in the college B one of the last remaining fragments of the revolutionary educational program put in place by Robert Maynard Hutchins. Demos gave him my name, and I got the job. I had never studied Anthropology or Sociology or Psychology, of course, although I *was* teaching all of those disciplines in our Social Studies tutorial. Following the practice that I now recommend to my job-seeking doctoral students, I told the folks at Chicago that teaching social sciences was what I had always most wanted to do, and that it was only the narrowness of the Harvard mindset that kept me trapped in Philosophy. I figured I could learn anything between April and September. When my students ask me about my career, I say that I started teaching at Harvard and then went on to teach at the University of Chicago. It all sounds very glamorous B the royal road to academic success. Little do they know that neither school hired me to teach what I actually knew something about.

I was fast approaching the end of my extraordinary eleven year Harvard adventure. In

Winthrop House, we gathered for a farewell dinner for one of the resident tutors who was about to go a good deal farther than Chicago. Karl Heider was a tall, lanky Anthropology graduate student who had been offered a chance to join an expedition to uplands New Guinea to study a headhunting people called the Ndani. This was a Stone Age society in which the men wore nothing but what Karl tactfully referred to, in German, as *peniskocher*. The expedition was being funded by Nelson Rockefeller's son, Michael. The local currency was cowrie shells, traded up from the coast, so the expedition was taking a hefty supply, figuring that American Express traveler's checks might not be readily negotiable. One old lady from Natick offered a monster cowrie shell from her shell collection that was worth a king's ransom in uplands New Guinea at the current rate of exchange. As the drinks flowed at the dinner, we got a bit boisterous, and accused Karl of planning to inflate the currency, with dire consequences for the Ndani economy. Sure enough, Karl wrote back some time later that after they had been there a while, it ceased to be possible to buy a pig with just one shell.

Richard Taub was going off to India with his tall, beautiful girlfriend Doris, to do sociological research for his dissertation. The two of them sent me a series of long, fascinating witty letters describing Indian society. Richard went to the University of Chicago after I had left, and worked with William Julius Wilson on his large research project in the South Side Black community.

I spent that last summer finishing my manuscript and preparing to leave Cambridge. In late August, I wrapped up the book and decided to take a little vacation. Since I had never visited Washington D. C., and now knew several people in the new Kennedy Administration, I took the train down to spend a week there. I checked into a hotel near the train station and went round to various office buildings to visit my friends. They were tremendously excited by their new jobs,

but as I spent time with them, I grew more and more uneasy. It was all a bit like the court at Versailles under the *ancien régime*. There was a great deal of gossip, and a constant anxiety about the thoughts, the feelings, the preferences, the moods of one person, the President.

When I went over to the Capitol to take a look at Congress, my view of the government changed entirely. I spent several days in the visitors= gallery of the Senate, watching debates and votes. The fact that it was the one cool place I had found in a steamy town may have had something to do with my reaction. I watched with great amusement as Everett Dirksen, the Wizard of Ooze, protested his love of duck hunting and hunters, imitating to great effect a duck settling onto a pond at sunset. Apparently the government had imposed a tax on duck hunting in order to raise money for wetlands preservation, and then had used the money to drain swamps for development. The duck hunters of America wanted a five million dollar appropriation to make things right, and Dirksen, who was opposing all spending that week on grounds of fiscal responsibility, was trying to convince the duck hunters of Illinois that he felt their pain. I watched the great maverick, Wayne Morse, bellow to an empty chamber that he was not going to kowtow to the Catholic Church, with regard to what I can no longer recall. And I watched as all but two of the senators came to the floor to vote on the renewal of the Civil Rights Commission.

What attracted me so greatly was the fact that each of these men and women was an independent person, beholden only to his or her constituents, and not subservient to the President, regardless of how charismatic and powerful he might be. These were men and women with honor, not servile courtiers hoping to be given pride of place on a balcony or a presidential jet. Exactly the same sentiments have welled up in me as I watch octogenarian Robert Byrd deliver speech after speech calling George Bush to account for the damage he is doing to the U. S. Constitution.

It was fun visiting Marc Raskin in the Executive Office Building, and listening to the rumors about Kennedy and Marc=s secretary. It was interesting hearing Dick Barnet talk about the inside story at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. But it was ennobling to watch the debates on the floor of the Senate. I think it was that week in a hot summer Washington, rather than any of the books I had read, that once for all time soured me on the Imperial Presidency.

The University of Chicago, which runs on the Quarter system, gave me permission to skip the Fall Quarter so that I could prepare the manuscript for submission to a press, and White arranged a small grant from the Kendall Foundation to help pay the bills until I started my Chicago job. But there was to be one more bit of draft dodging before my Harvard days were over. When a crisis blew up in Berlin, Kennedy pre-alerted four National Guard divisions, preparatory to calling up two of them to active duty. I did not want to return to latrine duty, however fond my memories of it, so I decided to transfer to the Illinois National Guard and move out to Chicago prematurely.

I rented a U-Haul trailer, hitched it to the ancient Plymouth that I had bought from Sam Todes for one hundred dollars, loaded up my books and bits and pieces of household goods, said goodbye to my friends and to Cindy, pointed myself to the West, and set out to discover whether there was a world beyond Harvard.