

Chapter Two Undergraduate Days

In September, 1950 I packed up my big black trunk, much as I had done each of the previous eight summers, took the shoreline train from Grand Central Station, and set out for Cambridge, Massachusetts to begin my college career. But this was no summer camp. I was about to embark on the most exciting three years of my life.

At South Station, I took the Red Line to Harvard Square, and crossed over to the entrance to Harvard Yard. Before I had time to find my way to Matthews Hall, I was waylaid by a representative of Gordon Linen, who signed me up on the spot for a weekly supply of sheets, pillow cases, and towels. My freshman year had begun.

At this point, I must take a moment to say something about the tone in which I shall speak of my undergraduate experiences. I am afraid it will strike the reader as comically self-important, a tone appropriate, if at all, only for a young man or woman who will go on to do great things. My purpose in adopting this tone is not to inflate my significance in the hope that the unwary reader will accord me a greater status than I deserve. Rather, it is to record, as accurately as possible, how I experienced these years *from the inside*, as it were.

In 1964, when I joined the Columbia Philosophy Department, the Chair was a sober, serious metaphysician named Justus Buchler. Justus was a very smart, widely read, desperately earnest systematic philosopher who had constructed a full-scale philosophical system, which he was in the process of unfolding in a series of books. Justus was everything that a major philosopher ought to be, and he believed deeply, plausibly, tragically as it turned out, that he deserved to be considered a major thinker. Unfortunately, almost no one in the field took the slightest interest in his theories. He was reputed to have one disciple, an obscure philosopher who taught, if my memory serves, in Columbia's School of Pharmacy [did Columbia even *have* a School of Pharmacy?]

The contrast between the respect accorded other philosophers and the neglect that was his

lot made Justus testy and somewhat resentful. But it did not deflect him by so much as the fraction of a degree from his life's task, which was to spell out the totality of his system. I tried to read one of his books, and found it impenetrable, but that is hardly a major cause for concern in Philosophy.

Justus was perhaps not as smart as Willard van Orman Quine – few people were. But he was certainly as smart as Wilfred Sellars, or Donald Davidson, or Roderick Chisholm, all of whom were widely read and respected in the philosophical community, and I venture to say that he was probably more deeply committed to his philosophical views than they were to theirs. Justus had read their writings dutifully, and had reasoned objections to their positions, though no one cared to hear them. Subjectively speaking, from the inside, from his own point of view, there was simply nothing to distinguish Justus from these vastly more successful competitors. The only problem, and it is, speaking *sub specie aeternitatis*, a small one, was that few people cared what he had to say.

My awareness of this sad state of affairs came upon me several years later, when the Department was given the opportunity to attempt to replace Ernest Nagel, who had gone to the newly formed Rockefeller University Philosophy Department. As we talked about which famous philosophers to try to woo to Columbia, Justus, who was still Chairman, made a wry face at each name floated. Quine? No. Davidson? No. Kripke? No. Sellars? No. Goodman? No. It seemed that no one was good enough, by his lights, to join us. Finally, in exasperation, I asked, “Are there any philosophers in the world whom you would support, regardless of whether they speak English?” Justus thought for a moment and said no. Entranced by this madness, I broadened my question. “Forget about alive. How about Descartes?” “Too narrow a conception of experience,” he replied. “Kant?” I ventured? “Inadequate grasp of the relationship between possibility and actuality.” “Is there *anybody in the entire history of philosophy who would be worthy of joining this department?*” Justus gave that some serious thought and replied, finally, “Aristotle, and Whitehead.”

Now, if Justus had undertaken to write his memoirs [which he well may have, for all I

know], would it have been appropriate for him to speak of himself as a minor figure, a failure, a philosophical wannabe, so to speak? Clearly not, for that would fail to capture what it had been like for Justus to *be* Justus. It was not *his* fault that the world paid him no mind. His only honest course, and the one that I have chosen for myself, is to describe just what it is like to *be* the subject of one's own life, and leave it to others to decide whether there is a comical disconnect between the subjective experience and the objective reality.

Freshman Year

I entered Matthews Hall, climbed up one flight to Number 7, and settled in. Harvard's accommodations were rather spacious. There were suites for one, two, three, or four students, each consisting of a bathroom, a living room, and a separate bedroom for each student. Matthews 7 was a double. My suite mate, it turned out, was a young man from Worcester, Mass named Howard Jacobson. Howie was a pleasant enough person with whom I had absolutely nothing in common save that we were both at least nominally Jewish, a fact that Harvard considered fully adequate grounds for pairing us. Howie explained to me that there were seven meat packers in the United States – four big ones and three little ones. His father, he said, was one of the three little ones. Over the next nine months, we left each other completely alone, save for one notable evening, when his parents came to town and took us out to the Charles Restaurant. The Charles, Mr. Jacobson explained, was one of his customers. I had never so much as seen the inside of anyplace that elegant. For five dollars - a considerable sum – one got a buffet from which one could choose steak, lobster, or roast beef.

The immediate task at hand was to select my courses for the Fall semester. As I have observed, the normal load was four, but I had already decided to graduate in three years, so I needed five. Here is an odd fact that says a good deal about the impact that my undergraduate years made on me. I have been teaching at the University of Massachusetts Amherst now since 1971, a total of more than thirty-two years. On countless occasions, I have asked a student, "What are you taking this semester?" Invariably, the student reels off two or three courses, pauses, locates another, and then stares off into space, trying without success to recall his or her

fifth course. I do not think I have yet met a single student who can, without hesitation, name all five of the courses he or she is currently enrolled in. And yet, as I began this chapter of my memoir, I took out a pad and wrote down without pause the names, and in more than half of the cases the course numbers and instructors, of every one of the thirty-two courses I took as an undergraduate at Harvard.

Some of my choices were dictated by Harvard's rather relaxed system of distribution requirements. Nineteen-fifty was the second year of the General Education program that would dominate Harvard's undergraduate curriculum for the next thirty years. The centerpiece of the program was a series of big lecture courses created by some of Harvard's most distinguished senior faculty. The plan was to require each undergraduate to take three full-year General Education courses, one in Humanities, a second in the Social Sciences, and a third in the Natural Sciences. Harvard was phasing the new program in, and as this was the second year, we were required to take only two of the three. The next year, the full requirement kicked in. The General Education courses, together with a writing requirement, a language requirement, and a group of courses in a major field, would satisfy the college's distribution requirements. I had managed to place out of the Freshman Composition course, but despite my three years of high school French, I still needed to take one intermediate level semester of language.

So French was my first course, and I chose Soc Sci 2 as my Gen Ed course for the year. That left three courses.

My original intention being to major in mathematics, I needed to start studying calculus. I had not so much as opened a calculus text in high school, but thanks to Dr. Frank, I was familiar with analytic geometry, which occupied a good part of the first semester of college calculus, so I decided to skip Math 1a and ask that I be allowed to move on to Math 1b. I very quickly discovered that Harvard had an attitude of extreme *laissez-faire* toward its undergraduates. Unlike the elite small private colleges, which tend to embrace rather seriously the notion that they stand *in loco parentis* to their charges, Harvard seemed to take the view that you could do as you pleased, so long as you managed to pass. I was enchanted by this benign

neglect, and in the next three years, I took full advantage of it.

Under pressure from my father, who still harbored the dream that I would study science, I was persuaded to sign up for Physics. The normal introduction to physics at Harvard in those days was a three semester sequence, but as an experiment, the younger members of the department had crafted a two-semester accelerated version called Physics 11. Imagining, rather unwisely, that my Honorable Mention in the Westinghouse indicated a talent for the hard sciences, I enrolled.

That left one course to go. Herb Winston told me flat out that I *must* take Philosophy 140, a middle level course which, at Harvard, was taken both by advanced undergraduates and by graduate students. Its subject was symbolic logic, and it was taught by Willard van Orman Quine. Quine had just that year published a little book called *Methods of Logic* which used a new system of formal proof that he called “Natural Deduction.” It was the text for the course.

I had my five courses.

Very quickly, I settled into the routine of college life, which for me meant a mixture of classes, study, odd jobs, and movies at the University Theater in Harvard Square. After a summer school session to complete the last credits she needed for a three-and-half-year degree [her birthday is January 16th, so she too entered high school in mid year], Susie had enrolled at Connecticut College for Women in New London, eighty miles to the south in New London. I wrote love letters to her almost every day, and when I had accumulated enough money, went down to see her for a weekend. I missed Susie terribly, and talked a good deal about her in the letters I wrote to my parents, but I actually found it peaceful to be all alone at Harvard, free to throw my energies into the extraordinary intellectual world that was opening up before me. Since I was going steady, I did not date, which saved me a good deal of time and money.

As part of my effort to help defray the cost of my education, I had offered to find my own pocket money. Tuition, room, and board was enough to ask of my parents. So I scrubbed floors, baby sat, waited tables, and every so often inventoried the local Robert Hall clothing store [a great gig, that, paying \$1.25 an hour – those of us who relied on the college employment office

waited hungrily for those semi-annual inventories.] It was too expensive to buy a round-trip train ticket to New London, so when I was able to make the trip, I would get up early on Saturday, put on a white shirt, a tie, and my gray flannel suit, and take the subway and the tram to the farthest south point on the route. Then I would climb down with my suitcase and stick out my thumb. The principal obstacle was Providence, Rhode Island, which lay smack across the road from Boston to New London. In all the years I hitched, I don't think I ever got a ride that actually took me *through* Providence. By early afternoon, I would arrive, and then Susie and I would spend the rest of Saturday together and all of Sunday, until it was time for me to catch the shore line back to Boston.

Susie was majoring in Philosophy and Botany, and even on cold autumn days we would take long walks in the college arboretum and talk about philosophical things. There was no question in my mind that she was the girl for me, and I took it for granted that we would one day marry. It never occurred to me that my parents might worry when their sixteen year old son wrote home so earnestly about wanting to marry his girlfriend, but Barbara, bless her heart, reassured them in her letters from Swarthmore that I was a sensible boy and wouldn't do anything foolish.

I made very few friends in college, preferring to keep my time free for my studies. In a way, it is a pity, I suppose, that I was not more outgoing. The Harvard class of '54 turned out to be a breeding ground for success, and I might, had I bestirred myself, come to know Ted Kennedy, or John Updike, or F. Lee Bailey. But I did find two kindred souls, with whom I spent many happy hours over the next three years singing madrigals. Michael Jorrin was a tall, blond, cheerful basso from Albuquerque, where his father was a professor. Richard Eder, who has since become quite well known as a newspaper reporter and then book reviewer, was a short, saturnine, ironic tenor who walked with a limp, the result, I believe, of childhood polio. In their very different ways, they were perfect companions and friends.

I have no gift for friendship, a fact that I have always deeply regretted. I saw a good deal of Mike for a while in Manhattan when I moved to Columbia. He and his wife, Vickie, were

living there while Mike pursued a career as a documentary film maker. But I did not keep up with Dick, and now, more than half a century later, I am saddened by the fact that neither of them is any longer in my life. It is entirely my fault. But I still have the graduation present they gave me in June, 1953 – a copy of the Kemp Smith translation of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. The inscription reads, “For Bob Wolff, Each even page from Michael Jorrin, Each odd page from Richard Eder. May 28, 1953” It was the copy I used for many years, until it became so tattered from constant reading that I had it rebound, and bought myself another working copy. I have never received a present that came to mean more to me, or that served me half so well.

Mike had roomed his Freshman year with Paul Matisse. In our sophomore year, when we all sorted ourselves out into the Harvard house system, Paul teamed up with two other members of our class – Steve Joyce and Sadri Khan. Paul was the grandson of Henri Matisse. Steve was the grandson of James Joyce. Sadri, or, to give him his proper name, Sadruddin Ali Khan, was the son of Ali Khan and Rita Hayworth, and the grandson of the Aga Khan. Three more feckless and incompetent students could not have been imagined! Sadri, in his first year, accomplished a feat that many would have thought impossible – he managed to fail six of his eight courses. The explanation might have been found in a picture on his desk of a New York chorus girl in a provocative pose with the inscription, “To Sadri, with all my love forever and ever, Bubbles.” But Harvard, even then, knew which side its bread was buttered on, and permitted Sadri to continue his studies. When he graduated, out of gratitude he endowed the first Harvard chair in Middle Eastern Studies. To be fair, Sadri did not simply disappear from view after graduation. He actually served a term as the U. N. High Commissioner for Refugees, so perhaps Harvard saw more deeply than we who knew him personally.

Most of my courses that first semester were pretty much what a Freshman might expect at college, but the logic course with Quine introduced me to a world that captivated me, so much so that by the middle of the year I had changed my major from Mathematics to Mathematics and Philosophy. A bit later I changed again to Philosophy and Mathematics, and finally, by my Sophomore year to Philosophy *simpliciter*.

Quine was then in his forties, one of a small group of younger philosophers who were transforming the Harvard department. In my first and second years, I took three courses with him – the elementary logic course, a graduate logic course, and a graduate logic seminar. He had a profound effect on my intellectual development, and is arguably one of the three or four most important American philosophers of the Twentieth century.

Quine was a tall, balding man with an oblong face and a quizzical look. He was ferociously smart – perhaps the smartest person I have ever met – and had a rather dry wit. He could also be very charming, especially in small groups. He must have been rather shy, for when he lectured to a class as large as Philosophy 140, which had perhaps sixty students or more in it, he spoke from a little set of 3 x 5 note cards on which he had prepared his class, and never deviated from them. Even in his graduate logic class, which I took in the first semester of my Sophomore year, he relied on those cards. He would take them out of his pocket, remove the rubber band that bound them, and begin to lecture. As he talked, he had the habit of stretching the rubber band between his two index fingers and rotating them, as though playing a little game of cat's cradle. One day, the rubber band slipped, and went flying into the lap of a student sitting in the front row. Nobody laughed, or so much as breathed, while the student soberly picked up the rubber band and returned it to Quine. He took it, stretched it between his fingers, and continued rotating it while he lectured. From time to time, he would rise and cover the blackboard with logical notation. At the end of the hour, when he left the room, no one would move for several minutes as we tried to catch up with his last lines of logic in our notes.

The text for the course was Quine's own book, *Mathematical Logic*, which he had first published in 1940. We used the second edition, which came out the year we took the course. It is worth saying a few words about what Quine had accomplished in the book, because, though I did not go on to become a formal logician, his style of reasoning and exposition had a very deep influence on my work even in subjects as far afield as political theory and Marxian economics.

Ever since the time of Leibniz in the 17th century, philosophers and mathematicians had sought a way to demonstrate that mathematics possessed the same absolute certainty and

complete independence of experience or observation as the syllogistic logic handed down to them by Aristotle. This quest had been called into question at the end of the 18th century by Immanuel Kant in the first part of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, but the dream had been revived by major advances in logical and mathematical analysis by a number of 19th century thinkers. The great contribution of Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead, to which I referred earlier, was actually to carry out a systematic rigorous deductive derivation of elementary arithmetic from a set of assumptions, or axioms, that were manifestly logical in nature, and contained nothing that looked even remotely like mathematics.

But *Principia Mathematica*, in which Russell and Whitehead laid out their results, was a monstrous three-volume work that was extremely difficult to read, and its key logical moves were difficult even for a formal logician to grasp. What Quine had done was to think through the structure of the argument in the *Principia* and find ways to set it forth in an immeasurably simpler, more transparent form. The result was a book that, even with Quine's addition of a good deal of material that had been developed by logicians since the publication of the *Principia*, ran to little more than three hundred pages. Quine's genius as a logician was a capacity for exposition that was at once absolutely rigorous and precise, and elegantly lucid. Without even realizing it at the time, I learned from him that this was the proper standard for philosophical exposition of any sort. Looking back, I see that I have spent my entire career striving to plumb the depths of obscure and difficult arguments which I can then expound simply, clearly, and rigorously.

An activity of this sort, even in the rarefied intellectual atmosphere which Quine inhabited, is of course secondary to the discovering of new logical results, and there were in fact no famous theorems that bore his name, no Quine's Theorem to stand alongside Gödel's Theorem. One evening, in his math logic seminar the next year, a graduate student asked Quine who were the ten greatest logicians of the 20th century. Quine thought for a moment and rattled off the obvious candidates – Hilbert, Gödel, and so forth. The student rather sycophantically asked, "And where do you come on the list?" Quine smiled and remarked dryly, "Right at the

top of the second ten.” This was probably a pretty accurate self-estimate at that moment in the middle of the century.

Quine’s philosophical reputation at that point rested on a number of extremely influential essays on metaphysical, logical, and epistemological topics that had appeared in leading journals. The year I graduated, he published a collection of them with a title taken from a popular calypso song: *From a Logical Point of View*. The lead essay, one of the most famous, is called “On What There Is.” The first paragraph gives a very good sense of his wit, the spare clarity of his language, and the complexity of thought that lay behind his apparently simple exposition. Here it is.

A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put in three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: “What is there?” It can be answered, moreover, in a word – “Everything” – and everyone will accept this answer as true. However, this is merely to say that there is what there is. There remains room for disagreement over cases; and so the issue has stayed alive down the centuries.

My second year, as I recall it, the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association held its annual meetings in New York City. The meetings always occurred between Christmas and New Year’s [which meant that they invariably coincided with my birthday.] I decided to attend, as I was home for the holidays. The first day, I was standing with a group of Harvard philosophy graduate students, trying desperately to look older than my just-eighteen years, when Quine walked up to the group. We all snapped to attention, as his eyes ran around the circle. Then he looked at me and said, “Well, Wolff. You must be the youngest person here.” I was utterly mortified. “Yes,” Quine went on, “It’s good to see you here. The sooner you start coming to these things, the sooner you will realize they are not worth coming to,” and with that, he walked off, leaving me to wish that the earth would open up and swallow me.

Quine did not suffer fools gladly, and as he became more famous, he would more and more often be accosted by eager young philosophers who had spent years puzzling over one of his articles and now wanted to try out their hard won objections on him. He was too polite to brush them off, but incapable of pretending that what they were saying was of the slightest

interest to him. His solution was to stand quietly as though he were listening intently, all the while puffing on his pipe. Periodically he would say, “yes, yes,” and go on puffing. He would keep this up until the poor young thing ran out of steam and drifted away.

But though he disdained idle chitchat, even with distinguished colleagues, he recognized real intelligence when he encountered it, no matter in what form it presented itself to him. During the time I was teaching at Harvard as an Instructor in Philosophy and General Education, the *wunderkind* Saul Kripke showed up as a Freshman at Harvard, having already had an article accepted for publication in *The Journal of Symbolic Logic*, the leading professional journal in the field. Saul was a piece of work but there was no denying his brilliance, and Quine treated him as an equal, in what I have always considered a manifestation of real academic class.

In 1960, Quine published what was to become perhaps his most influential book, *Word and Object*. Saul read it, and made an appointment with Quine to talk about it. When the day of the appointment arrived, Saul stood Quine up. Now, the morés of the Academy have changed in the past half century, and students these days [if I may speak with a crustiness befitting my age] no longer exhibit an appropriate respect for their elders and betters. But in those days, it was unheard of for a student – any student – to make an appointment with a professor and then simply not show up. Saul came slouching around a while later with some excuse, and Quine agreed to another appointment, at Eliot House, where Quine had an affiliation. Marshal Cohen, then a young Assistant Professor, told me that he walked by just as Saul and Quine were saying goodby, and swears that he heard Quine mumbling to himself, “Maybe I am all wrong. Maybe I have got it all wrong.”

Quine obviously had a sensual side to his nature to complement his intellect, as his attractive second wife and his love of food and jazz attested. But I always thought that there was some element of humanity missing from his makeup that gave him a rather cold aura. I came upon him one day in the middle of Harvard Yard talking with some people and stopped to listen. Quine had just returned from a trip to Germany – this was not yet fifteen years after the war, remember – and he was describing a tour he had taken of S. S. torture chambers. He exhibited

an eerie fascination with the technical efficiency of the facility that struck me as devoid of any real human appreciation for their demonic purpose.

But at the same time, Quine was punctilious about responsibilities that many senior professors routinely sloughed off. Every graduate student who had ever taken a course with him wanted a letter of recommendation when it came job seeking time, of course, and Quine dutifully cranked them out, even though he could easily have refused in all but a handful of special cases. One day my graduate school apartment mate invited me to a lunch at the Society of Fellows, an extremely exclusive gathering of the very brightest graduate students, of which Quine had, in the Thirties, been a founding member. It was all very elegant and Oxford high table, complete with silver candlesticks. Quine was there in his role as one of the Society's Senior Fellows. At the end of the meal, everyone jumped up and ran off. Without comment, Quine carefully collected up the candlesticks and replaced them in their locked cabinet.

At the end of my first semester, just as I was getting ready to return home for Christmas, my mother suffered a serious heart attack, and was taken to the hospital. Although she recovered and lived for twenty-five more years, the attack was a genuine tragedy in her life, for in those days, medical wisdom dictated that heart attack sufferers stop work and vegetate. She had been a hard-driving, efficient, productive person for thirty-five years, and it was simply impossible for her to adjust to the status of a semi-invalid. As the years passed, she suffered more and more ailments, some real, some imagined, and lost much of the edge that had characterized her for her first half-century. I visited her in the hospital, and told her all about my college experiences.

By the second semester of my Freshman year, I was decisively moving away from mathematics and in the direction of philosophy, though it would take me another semester and more to complete the transition. My Soc Sci, math, and physics courses continued on, but I was happily done with French, and logic had been a semester course, so I needed two replacements to round out the five. My first choice was the second half of a big Introduction to Philosophy taught by the one of the oldest members of the Department, Raphael Demos, who had a very big reputation as a Socrates-like grandfather figure. I rummaged through the course catalogue for

another possibility, and noticed a listing for something called “Logical Philosophy,”: taught by a visitor from the University of Pennsylvania, Nelson Goodman. I decided to sign up.

At the first meeting, Professor Goodman explained that he was about to publish a book entitled *The Structure of Appearance*. The course would be about that book, which we would all buy as soon as it became available a little later in the semester. I don’t think I will be surprising anyone or offending any sensibilities if I say that Nelson Goodman was a very queer duck. In addition to his interest in logic and the formal dimensions of epistemology, Goodman was, it turned out, a connoisseur of the arts who later on wrote extremely important and influential things about aesthetics. This might suggest a certain catholicity of taste and liberality of vision, but if it had been possible to take a spectrographic reading of his mind, it would have looked something like the spectrograph of hydrogen – several very sharp, narrow, brightly defined lines quite far apart, and nothing in between. Goodman had certain precise interests, scattered, to be sure, across the philosophical spectrum. If you sought to discuss with him one of those topics, in the terms in which he had defined it, he was acute, immediately engaged, and quite friendly. But if you asked a question that was one ångstrom to the right or left, his eyes glazed over and he exhibited an arctic lack of interest that could wither the most ebullient student. In later years, when he had become famous, he cultivated disciples, whom he would position in an audience when he gave a talk. If a question was asked, instead of answering it, he would nod to one of the *embeds*, who would give the proper answer.

Although the course number indicated that it was open both to undergraduates and graduate students, it was taken for the most part by graduate students, and I must have stuck out like a sore thumb. Goodman’s work was driven by a suspicion of such logical notions as “class,” which he thought did not correspond to anything in the world, and his book was a systematic attempt to see how far one could get with a logic of individuals. His philosophical motivation thus bore a certain resemblance to the constructivist mathematics of the great Dutch mathematician L. J. Brouwer. For my final paper, I undertook to construct a calculus of size along Goodmanian lines. I actually laid down some axioms and managed to prove three or four

theorems, but I only got a B+ in the course, a fact that bummed me out.

Thus it was that by the end of my Freshman year in college, I had studied at a the graduate level with Willard van Orman Quine and Nelson Goodman, two of the most rigorous philosophical thinkers of the 20th century. In light of this extraordinary fact, it is not surprising that by the time I was a Sophomore, I was beginning to think of myself as a philosopher.

But there was still the little matter of physics. It turned out that I had no real talent for the subject, and wanted very much to drop it at the middle of my Freshman year, but my father insisted that I stick it out for both semesters, and I gave in. The problem wasn't the calculations. In fact, because it was being taught at an advanced level, there was very little in the way of computation, and we did not need to use slide rules [which was fortunate for me, since I had never mastered them]. Instead, we were expected to use our insight into theory – “physical intuition,” the Instructor called it – and I had very little of that. I detested the labs, which we were required to write up meticulously in big notebooks filled with graph paper. I recall one laboratory exercise, which consisted of firing a 22 caliber bullet into a big block of wood suspended just in front of it like a pendulum. The idea was to mark how high the block swung when struck, and then, assuming various values for the muzzle velocity and mass of the bullet and the block, confirm certain elementary laws of physics. The problem was that the margin of error in the calculations was so enormous that virtually any reading the apparatus could yield would constitute a confirmation of the law of the conservation of momentum.

The culmination of this educational fiasco was the final examination in the second semester. I can still recall one of the questions: An airplane with a wingspan of 300 feet is traveling at a velocity of 300 miles due north. The earth's magnetic field at that point is 0.6 Gauss downward. Calculate the static charge induced between the wingtips. I actually knew the formula, and cranked out an answer. As I left the exam, I walked along next to another student, who was on his way to becoming a physicist, and asked him what he had gotten on that question. Ever the cautious Harvard student, he replied, “What did you get?” “0.6 times ten to the eighth statcoulombs,” I replied. He looked at me incredulously, and asked gingerly, “Do you have any

idea how large a charge that is?" I allowed as how I hadn't a clue. "That is a charge so large," he said slowly, "that if it were discharged, it would split the earth in half!" It seems that in the process of converting units, I had multiplied instead of dividing by 10 to the fourth. It was as though someone had used trigonometry to calculate the height of a woman by measuring her shadow and the angle of the sun's rays, and had come to the conclusion that she was eleven miles tall. A little physical intuition would alert him to the probability of error. But I completely lacked that intuition. Clearly, physics was not my subject.

The story has a happy ending, however. When all the grades were in, the instructor looked at the curve and decided it was too low, so my C+ became a B-. Thus it is that I can honestly say I did honors work in physics at Harvard.

Quite the most memorable moment of the entire course was a show put on by a group of young math and physics instructors for the amusement of us students. They called it "The Physical Review," which was apparently the name of a leading professional journal. The show was written and directed by a math instructor named Tom Lehrer, who also sang from the piano. We were the first people in the world to hear some Lehrer classics, such as "Plagiarize", and his version of the Gilbert and Sullivan patter song, "I am the very model of a modern major-general," with the names of all of the elements substituted for the original words, as well as a rollicking bump-and-grind number called "The Definition of a Derivative." That same Spring, Lehrer gave a concert at the Freshman Union, where all of us took our meals, and he sang his classic religious hymn, "The Father, The Son, The Holy Ghost, and You, Baby." It wasn't all studying that first year.

Before moving on to Sophomore year, there is a small matter of confession that must be attended to. I have been keeping this to myself for fifty-two years, and I think it is about time to come clean and ask for forgiveness. As I have said, periodically I would go to New London to see Susie, but once during the Fall, she came up to Cambridge to see me. We decided that we would spend the night together at the old Essex Hotel, a seedy place just opposite South Station, on the outer edge of Boston's Chinatown. When it came time for us to check in, I was afraid to

use my real name, and rather than register us as Mr. And Mrs. John Smith, on the spot I pulled out the name of one of my classmates who was famously proper, and signed us in as Mr. And Mrs. Charles Dacre Parsons. Charlie is now nearing the end of a distinguished career as a Harvard Professor of Philosophy. I have a nightmare vision of some beady-eyed graduate student writing a doctoral dissertation on Professor Parsons' work in the philosophy of mathematics, and somehow surfacing the fact that in 1950, he registered at a Boston hotel with a lady manifestly not his wife. So if you ever read this, Charlie, please accept my belated apologies.

Sophomore Year

The move from Freshman to Sophomore year was fraught with significance and no little anxiety. In the first year, all students lived in Harvard Yard, in dormitories to which they were assigned. But from Sophomore year onward, one entered the famous Harvard House system. Dunster, Winthrop, Kirkland, Lowell, Adams, Eliot, or Leverett – where you lived determined your college identity and initiated a network of lifelong friendships and associations. The houses were markedly different from one another. Eliot and Lowell were the *faux* English colleges, much favored by upper crust private school types. Winthrop was the jock house, Adams the home for brains and non-conformists.

At the end of the Freshman year, pairs, triples, and quadruples of students would seek one another out and apply as a group to one or another of the houses. Then there were interviews, at which the Master or his assistant, the Senior Tutor, would attempt to determine whether the group was compatible with the self-image of the house.

I was deeply offended by this process. Having made it into Harvard, I had cleared all the hoops I was going to jump through, so I simply refused to apply. Naturally, I was not admitted to any house. But I *was* a Harvard student in good standing, and something had to be done with me, so I was assigned a cavernous, expensive single in Claverly Hall, the overflow building that Harvard was using to accommodate the few students for whom there were no house suites.

Since it sat across the street from Adams House, I was made an eating member of Adams.

Harvard may have thought it was punishing me; I don't know. But I felt like Br'er Rabbit in the Uncle Remus stories. I had been thrown into a briar patch, and I was right at home. I was all alone. No one knew me. No one cared that I was there. I could sleep as late as I wished, study all night, hitchhike down to see Susie and return with no one even aware that I had been gone. Free even of good advice to ignore, I plunged into a feverish study of philosophy and logic.

In those days Harvard managed quite effectively to create a safe, cushioned space in which I could focus my energies entirely on philosophy. Widener Library, and its newer, more utilitarian undergraduate branch, Lamont, was all the world I needed or wanted. When I left Harvard ten years later, I realized for the first time that research might consist of more than simply going from one floor of Widener to another. It seemed to possess every book ever printed, and in musty wings of little visited levels I would come upon original eighteenth century journals and colonial American logic texts. There was even an extraordinary collection of mysteries, courtesy of an alumnus from an earlier age, where I could read my way through every book written by John Dickson Carr, Josephine Tey, Rex Stout, or Agatha Christie.

The world cooperated in this happy, self-imposed inner exile. Although my undergraduate days perfectly coincided with the Korean War, I felt little need to pay attention. Years later, as I watched my students at Columbia struggle with the impossible task of balancing their studies with their fight against America's Viet Nam disaster, I would reflect on how lucky I had been. They would ask me how to become both a serious philosopher and a committed activist, as I had done, and I would answer truthfully but uselessly, First put the world away from you for a few years and bury yourself in logic and the history of philosophy.

The happiest time of each semester was the long "Reading Period" between the end of classes and the onset of final exams. At Conn College, reading Period for Susie was a single day, or two at most, but Harvard, understanding that many of its gentlemen-scholars might have fallen a trifle behind on their reading, due to the press of social engagements, allowed a generous

week or ten days in which to catch up and cram for finals. During this time, the Harvard radio station held what it described as “orgies.” Twenty-four hours a day, they would play classical music, starting with Gregorian Chant and working their way slowly up to the great Romantic composers. A student announcer would say, “And now, sixteen hours of Bach” or “here are Beethoven’s nine symphonies.” Since I frequently worked straight through the night, I could listen to endless hours of Bach or Vivaldi or Palestrina before having an early breakfast.

It wasn’t all studying, of course. There were distractions and amusements aside from the regular visits to the University Theater and mysteries. One evening during my Sophomore year, Carl Sandburg came to give a lecture. Anticipating a crowd, Harvard scheduled the talk in New Lecture Hall, where I had listened to Sam Beer the year before in Soc Sci 5. By the time I got there, every seat was taken, and I had to stand along the side wall. Craggy, weather-beaten, simply dressed in work clothes, Sandburg was everything I had imagined him to be during my high school days. He read from *The People, Yes* and spoke about Abraham Lincoln. Near the end of his talk, he told a joke that has stayed with me to this day. It is the perfect antidote to the endless public celebration of wealth and success in America that fills our public discourse these days.

It seems, Sandburg began, that two cockroaches, brothers, were riding on a farmer’s cart into town one day, when the cart hit a bump, and they were both thrown off. The first brother fell on a big pile of dung, which is seventh heaven for a cockroach. He settled in, ate himself fat and glossy, and prospered. The second brother fell into a deep hole, where there was nothing to eat and scarcely any way to get out. Slowly, laboriously, he dragged himself up the side of the hole, repeatedly falling back and starting again. He grew thin and weak, and his shell lost its sheen, becoming dull and discolored. At long last, by the greatest of effort, he managed to heave himself back onto the road. Looking up, he saw his brother perched happily atop his dung pile. “Brother,” he said, looking up, “You are so fat and sleek. How have you managed to flourish like that?” His brother looked down disdainfully over the edge of the dung and said, with a smug self-congratulatory smile, “Brains. And hard work.”

Nineteen fifty-two was also the year of the first Eisenhower/Stevenson face-off. But Harvard's universal first choice for the office of president was a small, feckless possum named Pogo. Walt Kelly's cartoon strip, Pogo, was to the fifties what Doonesbury would later be to the seventies. All of us sported "I Go Pogo" campaign buttons, and on the day that Walt Kelly came to town for a rally, Harvard Square was a solid mass of screaming students. I was in the mob somewhere, but never managed to get close enough actually to see, let alone to touch, the great man.

Rather closer to home and more personal were the occasional student riots that offered an hour's relief from the grind of study. To readers accustomed to televised scenes of riot police, burning cars, and clouds of tear gas, it is necessary to explain what constituted a riot at Harvard. Somewhere in the distant past, the custom had grown up of calling students out of their dorms into Harvard Yard on the occasion of a crisis with the cry "Reinhardt!" None of us had any idea who Reinhardt was, or had been, but we very quickly learned to respond when the cry went up. We would pour out of the dorms and mill around, eager for action but having no notion what that might be. Administrative types would walk quietly through the crowd greeting students by name, on the quite correct presumption that anyone who realized that he had been personally identified was not very likely to engage in genuinely punishable behavior. After a bit, we would look at each other quizzically and drift back to our rooms to continue studying.

My favorite riot took place in the little space just in front of the Lampoon Building, formed by the intersection of Mt. Auburn Street and the extension of Bow Street. A Cambridge politician had ventured into Harvard territory in his car, and in traditional town/gown fashion, we had poured out to jeer him. Several hundred of us gathered, surrounding his car, where we were very quickly joined by Deans, Senior Tutors, and the Harvard Police. Three or four students yelled "To the Yard," and started running up Plympton Street past Adams House, trying to spark a stampede. Half way up the street, they turned and looked behind them, to discover that no one had moved. We were all standing there watching and hoping that something would happen. Harvard in those days was a college of observers, not participants.

I did engage in one small act of political protest that, as it turned out, would come back to haunt me. James Bryant Conant, then President of Harvard, responded to a reporter's question by saying that although he would not fire a faculty member who was a Communist, he would not hire one. I was outraged, and as soon as I had climbed up on my high horse, I wrote a letter to the Harvard *Crimson* in which I condemned Conant for his statement, made allusions to John Stuart Mill [whom I had read just the previous semester], and concluded by saying that if Conant could not uphold the ideals of liberal education, he should step down from his position as President. Another student wrote a reply, and as sometimes happens in these cases, conferred an honorary doctorate on me by referring to me as "Dr. Wolff."

Well, as it happened there actually *was* a Dr. Robert Wolff at Harvard – Dr. Robert Lee Wolff, Historian and Fellow of the Russian Research Center. Bobby Wolff, as he was known to his friends, was a portly gentleman with social aspirations, an expert on the Byzantine Empire who later in life also wrote a book on Victorian literature. I imagine he came in for some odd looks and comments when "Dr. Wolff" was referred to in the *Crimson's* letter columns, because yet another letter appeared, signed by Robert Lee Wolff, stating that he was *not* the Robert Wolff who had called on the President to step down. Alas, this would not be the last time the Harvard community confused the two of us.

In my three years as a Harvard undergraduate, I only had one encounter with the University police. One evening, as I sat in my third-floor Claverly room studying, I was disturbed by a racket down below on the street. I looked out the window and saw a group of Final Club types dressed in tuxes, clearly drunk and making all sorts of noise. I yelled down to them to be quiet, but they just ignored me. Finally, in exasperation, I pulled out the bottom drawer of my desk, filled it with water from the bathtub, and dumped it on them. As luck would have it, just as I let fly two Harvard cops came around the corner, drawn, I imagine, by the noise. They looked up, spotted me, and moved toward the Claverly front door around the corner. I doused the light, stripped off my clothes, and jumped into bed, trying to create the impression that I was sound asleep. Sure enough, they knocked on my door, and when I let them in, primed

with my cover story, I realized that there was an incriminating trail of drops leading from the bathroom to the window. They took a look, read the signs, decided to let it go, and left. It was not to be a replay of Miss Hickman and the pins.

That second undergraduate year, I took three graduate logic courses and seminars, three advanced philosophy courses, a year-long course on Modern Algebra, and – my last token nod to the notion of a general education – a Humanities course that took us through some classical and modern literature. The third of my three logic courses was an advanced seminar on set theory taught by a young Assistant Professor named Hao Wang. Wang was Quine’s best student, and had followed Quine into the Society of Fellows. He was a brilliant logician, and had discovered a contradiction in the first edition of *Mathematical Logic*, thereby necessitating the second edition in which Quine corrected the error. He spoke English with a heavy Chinese accent overlaid with German, perhaps his first Western tongue. The result, which was barely comprehensible, sounded a bit like garbled Spanish.

The Humanities course was a bit of a joke. I felt as though I had gone backwards to grade school, and paid it very little mind, which perhaps accounts for the most hilarious error I have ever made on an exam. The first reading of the semester was a prose translation of the *Odyssey*, which we were asked to read over the weekend between the organizational meeting of the class, on a Friday, and the first meeting on Monday of the small discussion sections in which the course henceforth met. A bit later on, we plowed through Herodotus, but obsessed by the philosophy in which I was immersed, I paid precious little attention to either book.

On the first quiz, we were given a list of spot identifications, among which was “Nausicaa.” I couldn’t for the life of me remember who or what Nausicaa was, but it sounded like a city-state to me, so I tossed a mental coin and wrote “Nausicaa – city-state allied with Sparta in the Peloponnesian Wars.” Well, Nausicaa, as it turns out, is the princess who pulls Odysseus from the sea half-drowned. My instructor, Mr. Brown, to his credit, did not mark it wrong. He simply put a long string of exclamation points next to it.

In the Fall semester I took a course on the philosophy of the great eighteenth century

Scottish writer David Hume, with another of the new wave of younger professors, Henry David Aiken. Aiken was a brilliant, quirky, energetic heavy drinker who affected speaking out of the side of his mouth and was a special buddy of Quine. For some obscure reason that no one could explain, each of them called the other “Ledger,” possibly an in joke at the expense of the philosopher Ledger Wood. The principal reading of the course was Hume’s *hauptwerk*, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Almost immediately, I got into a nasty *contre temps* with Aiken that foreshadowed bigger trouble to come. A little inside baseball is necessary to explain what happened.

In the opening sections of the first part of the *Treatise*, Hume articulates his fundamental claim, which is that all of the mind’s ideas are copies of impressions that it has received either through the five senses or from a process that he called “reflection.” In the course of defending this claim, which is the basis for every subsequent argument in the book, Hume observes that there is in fact one exception to this general truth. If we have observed all of the shades of color in a spectrum save one, he says, the mind can somehow form an idea of the absent impression, so that in this one case, there could be an idea that is not a copy of a preceding impression.

Aiken apparently wanted to build a new interpretation of Hume on this exception, and made much of it in one of his opening lectures. I raised my hand to ask whether it wasn’t the case that Hume needed his general rule for later arguments, so that were we to take seriously this supposed exception, it would undermine everything that was to come. Aiken clearly didn’t want to pause in his flight of fancy, so rather irritably he asked me what later arguments I had in mind. I had not yet read more than a few pages of the *Treatise*, so I said I did not know. “Well,” he replied, “when you find one, bring it up,” and went on with his lecture.

I was furious at being brushed off, so I went home, sat down, and read through the entire Book One of the *Treatise*, all 279 pages of it. At the start of the next class, even before the bell had rung, I raised my hand. Aiken looked rather startled and called on me. “You will recall,” I said, “that I asked last class about future arguments that would be undermined were we to allow Hume the exception he mentions to the general principle that every idea is a copy of a precedent

impression. You suggested that I bring this matter up when I could name the arguments that would be affected. Here are some of them,” and I proceeded to cite chapter and verse from Book One. When I had finished, Aiken waved his hand, said dismissively, “Well, that isn’t very interesting,” and began his lecture.

As I buried myself ever more deeply in my studies, I became aware of the rhythms of my mind. I quickly learned that I could not organize my studying neatly with a schedule – an hour for logic, then thirty minutes of Hume. Very often, when my classes were done and I had eaten dinner, I would find myself restless and unable to concentrate. I would read a mystery, go to a movie, daydream. It was as though something inside me of which I was only dimly aware was arranging itself. I thought of myself as falling lower and lower into idleness and wasted time. If I tried to make myself work by force of will, telling myself that I had assignments to complete and classes to prepare for, it was no good. I simply could not get started. So I would allow myself to continue falling, learning to trust a part of myself that I could not access directly by introspection. Finally, I would hit bottom and something inside would turn over. I would be at peace with myself, completely integrated into myself, and I could begin to study. Then, I would study with ferocious concentration for hours, often not stopping until the sun began to come up.

There is a beautiful passage in Zora Neale Hurston’s great novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, that captures a similar moment of transformation. “Janie stood where he had left her for unmeasured time and thought. She stood there until something fell off the shelf inside her. Then she went inside there to see what it was.” [Page 67].

The highlight of the year, as it turned out, was not the seminar with Quine or the passage at arms with Aiken, but a course on the seventeenth century metaphysician Baruch Spinoza, taught by the most extraordinary professor I encountered during my undergraduate career. Harry Austryn Wolfson, Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy, was a world-class scholar of apparently limitless erudition who looked like a Jewish version of the cartoon character, The Little King. He was short and round with an accent as thick as my grandmother’s, despite having spent his life in Boston. He read Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, Latin, Greek, and all

of the modern European languages, and was the complete master of the religio-philosophical tradition that stretched from Graeco-Roman times, across the great medieval fusion of Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin texts, to the early modern period that culminated with Spinoza.

Wolfson rotated teaching a trio of philosophy courses, one each year, on Aristotle, the Church Fathers, and Spinoza. In 1951-52, it was Spinoza's turn, and that Spring I enrolled. Wolfson's unworldliness was as famous as his scholarship, and there were endless stories that circulated about him. He had an office in Widener Library itself, where he was reputed on occasion to snare a new scholarly tome as it came into the library, even before the librarians had a chance to catalogue it. It would disappear into the chaos of his office, and never be heard from again. One day, so the story goes, a young undergraduate came to see Wolfson, who, despite his formidable learning, was actually a rather sweet and approachable man. Unable to find the book he needed to answer the student's question, Wolfson motioned to him to follow, and plunged into the library stacks, making his way to a corner of a subterranean floor that no one but Wolfson had visited in decades. Climbing up on a stool to reach a high shelf, he was about to take the volume down when a thought struck him. Peering down over his large glasses, he said to the student, "You do read Persian, don't you?"

As a bachelor, Wolfson was accustomed to take lunch every day at the Faculty Club, where he would sit at the long table set aside for those who did not have formal lunch plans. Apparently the conversation turned one day to teaching – not the usual subject of faculty chitchat – and several of the professors alluded to classroom discussions. Wolfson had never actually conducted a classroom discussion, the students by and large not having anything approaching the scholarly background necessary for a useful colloquy, but he was intrigued by the thought of this pedagogical innovation, and decided to give it a try. When he came into class the next day, he put a question to the eighty or so of us, undergraduates and graduate students, who regularly attended his lectures: Was Spinoza an atheist? The casual reader of Spinoza [if indeed there is such a person] might think this an absurd question, because every page of the *Ethics* and *Short Treatise* seems replete with references to God. But there had in fact been a considerable furor in

Spinoza's own day about his metaphysical beliefs, and he had actually been excommunicated from the synagogue in Amsterdam because of their fear that his unorthodox views would bring the wrath of the state down on the Jewish community.

Well, the graduate students were delighted by the opportunity to express an opinion, and a discussion ensued whose liveliness would have gladdened the heart of any professor. Oddly, though, as the debate went on, Wolfson grew visibly more upset, and finally, he summarily terminated it. It seemed that when he asked the question, Was Spinoza an atheist?, he expected us to cite seventeenth century Dutch opinion on the matter. Once it became clear to him that none of us was at all acquainted with seventeenth century Dutch opinion, he concluded that we could not carry on an intelligent discussion, and he went back to lecturing.

The next year, I took Wolfson's Aristotle course, during which, in an astonishing *tour de force*, he managed to extract from a close commentary on the first five Books of Aristotle's *Physics* the entire sweep of philosophical thought from Plato to Spinoza. There were some delicious moments. Early in the semester, non-Jewish students adopted the practice of sitting next to Jewish students, in hopes of getting a helpful *sotto voce* translation from time to time. The problems caused by Wolfson's accent reached a crisis one day as he was lecturing on Aristotle's theory of matter, which in his pronunciation sounded something like "Eristutl's theory of metter." He spent a considerable time on the absolutely central fact that according to Eristutle, metter is edible. By and large, one did not ask questions in a Wolfson lecture, and since he was severely short-sighted, he was unlikely to notice a hand even if it were raised, but a mystified graduate student, who could not contain himself, managed to wave his hand so vigorously that Wolfson sensed some disturbance in the force and looked up. "Why is it important to Aristotle that matter is edible," the student asked. Wolfson looked puzzled. The student repeated, "Why is it important to Aristotle that we can eat matter?" Now Wolfson knew that he was in the presence of idiocy. "Eat metter? Vat are you talking about? Edible, edible. Vun plus vun is two, two plus two is four. Edible."

Wolfson, it turned out, was as big a fan as I of the movies, and I actually saw him on

occasion in the University Theater, sitting as far down front as he could get. One day, he was lecturing on ancient notions of contingency and fate, and he observed that the Greek atomists denied the existence of a divine plan or purpose in nature. Niagara Falls was not put there so that Marilyn Monroe could walk in front of it, he explained. It was there, and they simply used it for that purpose. We were all mystified, until we recalled that *Niagara* was playing that week at the University Theater.

The summer after my Freshman year had been spent taking the two courses I needed if I was to graduate in three years, but I now had to find some way of making some money after my Sophomore year. Once again, my mother came to the rescue, this time thanks to her time at the New York Herald Tribune, where she had served as secretary to the City Editor from 1919 or so until 1929. She still had some connections, and with a phone call managed to arrange for me to spend the summer as a copy boy at the Trib. I lived at home and worked the night shift, from 4 p.m. to midnight five days a week. It was, as it would turn out, the only time in my entire life that I punched a time clock and did what the rest of the world considers work. At the time I thought of it simply as a job. Not until many years later did I realize that a position as copy boy at the Trib or the Times was an entrée for which even seasoned out-of-town reporters would compete.

Copy boys [there were no copy girls] were essentially city room gophers. We would sit around until someone yelled “copy,” and then we would carry paper from one desk to another, or go down to the press room for the long strips of paper on which newspaper columns were printed, or even, on occasion, leave the Tribune Building and run an errand to our major competitor, the New York TIMES. There were no computers, of course, nor even, as I recall, electric typewriters. The city room was dominated by a big horseshoe-shaped desk at which the rewrite men sat. As reporters called their stories in from the field, they would write them up in printable form, and then call for a copy boy to take the copy to the appropriate desk.

The summer of 1952 was an exciting time, what with a national election, the Olympics, the fall of King Farouk in Egypt, and the big Sugar Ray Robinson title fight under the lights at

Yankee Stadium. All eyes were on the titanic struggle for the Republican nomination between the hero of old-time small town mid-Western Republicanism, Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, and the charismatic hero of World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the candidate of the Eastern internationalist big business wing of the party. Taft's floor manager was Everett Dirksen of Illinois, the Wizard of Ooze, as he had been christened in recognition of his syrupy, mellifluous tones and orotund rhetoric. Eisenhower's forces were led by Thomas E. Dewey of New York, twice the unsuccessful presidential candidate for the Republicans. The Trib was supporting Eisenhower.

The first test of strength came with the seating of the Texas delegation. There were two competing groups from Texas seeking convention recognition, one committed to Taft and the other to Eisenhower. The issue came to a floor vote early one evening, and as the delegations were polled, the national reporters sat in the City Room glued to a radio, waiting for the outcome so that they could write their stories. Polling a convention, state by state, was a tedious and time-consuming process, and the deadline for the early edition approached. The reporters became more and more anxious as the roll call droned on. Then disaster struck. A member of the New York delegation asked that the delegation be polled. He was challenging the figures that the head of the delegation had reported to the convention. In those days, in an attempt to give more convention slots to party faithful, the Republicans had adopted the practice of splitting delegation seats, so that New York, with eighty or ninety votes, might have two hundred delegates, each of whom had to be asked by name how he or she had voted. The reporters finally threw in the towel, and wrote their stories without knowing how the vote would come out.

In the end, of course, the Eisenhower forces prevailed, and he went on to win two terms. It was the last dying gasp of old-time Republicanism. When the party underwent its transformation twelve years later in the aftermath of Johnson's landslide defeat of Barry Goldwater, it had shed its old skin as an honorable home for yeoman farmers and small businessmen, and emerged as the association of reactionary bigotry, religious fanaticism, modern-day racism, and crony capitalism that it is today.

During my two-month tour in the Tribune city room, I actually witnessed that staple of all old-fashioned newspaper movies, the moment when the City Editor picks up the phone and yells, “Stop the presses!” In an attempt to steal a march on the TIMES, the Trib brought out an eight p.m. edition called the Early Bird, featuring the day’s sports results in the two left-hand columns of the first page. Each evening, as the first copies came up from the press room, the men at the city desk would very rapidly skim the entire paper for errors, which could be corrected before too many copies had been run off. The City Editor was an absolute terror of a man named Kalgren, who was called The Count by everyone who worked under him. One evening, Kalgren picked up the paper and red through the sports columns. I happened to be standing nearby when he really did shout into the phone, “Stop the presses.” Apparently at the bottom of the front page sports summary, it said “continued on page 34,” but when Kalgren looked on page 34, there was no continuation. Wars, revolutions, and the dethroning of monarchs was all in a day’s work, but missing sports news was serious!

Because I was living at home, I was able to see more of Susie. There had been some faint indications of trouble in the relationship, though I was still convinced that we were going to keep going steady until we could get married. In an effort to romance her a bit, I decided to use some of my Tribune earnings for a night on the town. The two of us got dressed up and went along to the Blue Angel, a small night club in Manhattan. There was a twenty-five dollar minimum, but since Susie and I did not drink, we used it up having dinner. The floor show that evening consisted of an opening act by a new young comedian, Orson Bean, and two featured singers, Josh White and Eartha Kitt. I still remember Bean’s opening line. He came out, looking rather nervous, and said, “Good evening. I am Orson Bean, Harvard ‘48. Yale nothing.” Josh White sang songs I knew from Shaker Village and even Taconic. It was, as it turned out, the only time I have ever been to a night club. I guess if you get something right the first time, there is no point in doing it again.

Senior Year

One member of an Adams triple having moved out, I was finally able, for my last year, to

experience the joys of House living. My roommates were two cheerful irreverent juniors, Milt Shlein and Judah Rubin. I would still have my own room, but I was now sharing the living room and bathroom with others. During much of the year, the living room was the site of a running penny ante poker game. I played once and lost fifty cents, which was my life limit, so thereafter I stayed in my room and worked.

By now, I knew that I wanted an academic career as a professor of Philosophy, so I gritted my teeth and signed up for German. My previous encounter with the language had been Mark Twain's hilarious essay, "The Awful German Language." An ominous sign. As a last parting sop to my father, I also took a course on atomic physics for non-majors – "Atomic Physics for idiots," as it was popularly known. The rest was philosophy.

By now I was running low on options as I had already taken ten of the department's upper level and graduate courses. But there were some unimagined delights in store for me. The first semester, I signed up for Morton White's course on Analytic Philosophy and Clarence Irving Lewis' undergraduate epistemology course. White was, with Quine and Aiken, the third of the youthful triumvirate who were challenging the department's old guard. A short, balding man [only Aiken seemed to be able to manage a full head of hair], White had been hired in tandem with Henry Bugbee, the two of them being told that one would go up and one would go out. Inasmuch as White was promoted to a tenured Associate Professorship within two years, the handwriting was pretty clearly on the wall for Bugbee. I had taken Bugbee's rather idiosyncratic course on Hellenistic Philosophy as a Sophomore, and I liked him, but I had to admit Harvard had made the right choice. Since this is the last appearance he will make in these pages, I think I owe it to him to note that he was the only Harvard professor I ever encountered who actually had students to his home for dinner. Harvard was not exactly touchy feely.

But it was Lewis who would come to play a more important role in my intellectual development than anyone else I met at Harvard, including Quine. Mr. Lewis, as he was called by everyone, including his senior colleagues, was a Victorian gentleman who sported a vest and a pince-nez and would begin a seminar by formally introducing each person around the table to

each other person, since he believed that one could not hold a proper discussion until one had been properly introduced. Lewis stood in a long and very distinguished Harvard tradition of philosopher-logicians. At many universities, logic was viewed as an adjunct of mathematics, and its practitioners exhibited great technical proficiency but a general lack of concern for the broader philosophical implications of their formal manipulations. In the history of Western thought, of course, logic had been very much the core of philosophy, and the great logicians, from Plato and Aristotle to Descartes and Leibniz, were first and foremost philosophers for whom formal reasoning was an instrument of philosophical investigation.

Harvard had kept alive this honorable tradition, with such figures as Alfred North Whitehead, Lewis, and then Quine. Lewis was a theorist of knowledge – an epistemologist, to use the philosophical jargon – who had made important contributions to the early development of modal logic. His work was rooted in the branch of empiricism that had come to be known in America as Pragmatism, but it was rigorous philosophical analysis, not the superficial grab bag of nostrums and life lessons that have come to be grouped under that heading. His most famous book was a large work called *Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, but I think I am not alone in believing that far and away his greatest work, and perhaps one of only two books ever written by Americans that deserve to be called philosophical classics, was his earlier work, *Mind and the World Order*.

My senior year was, as it turned out, Lewis' last, and I quickly realized that I had better take every course he offered, for I would never again have the opportunity to study with him. In the Spring, I enrolled in both of his offerings – a graduate seminar on epistemology, and the course he had been teaching for so many years on Kant's *First Critique*. The seminar made no very great impression on me, save for the fact that on the last day, Lewis brought in to the class a number of books that he said he would no longer need, and invited the students to select one each. My fellow students made a grab for courtesy copies Lewis had received of the latest publications in the field, but I spotted a copy of *Analysis* and made a dive for it. I am to this day smugly proud of the fact that my copy of *Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* is inscribed "To

Robert P. Wolff, C. I. Lewis, Cambridge, Apr. 29, 1953.”

The Kant course was something else again. All of us who ever took it agree that it was the best philosophy course we ever took. I would venture the somewhat bolder judgment that it was the best philosophy course ever taught anywhere by anyone, perhaps with the exception of the courses of lectures that Kant himself gave at Königsberg.

The entire semester was devoted to a study of the *Critique*, and even then, we did not actually get through all of it. Lewis used a teaching method that had become famous over the years, the method known familiarly as the Kant Summaries. Each week, he would assign the next portion of the book – roughly fifty or sixty pages each time. We were then to write a subsection by subsection, paragraph by paragraph summary of the text, the entire summary to run between five and seven pages. On the right or left hand side of the page, we were to place a running indication of which passage we were summarizing, using the standard A and B numbers to indicate the first [1781] and second [1787] editions of the *Critique*. There was to be no commentary, no reflection on the larger meaning, just straight summary, as accurate and precise as possible.

As it turned out, the weekly Kant Summary was quite the most daunting task any of us had ever attempted. It took perhaps twenty hours a week to do each summary, and as we soon learned, the space specification was fiendishly designed to force us to master the text sufficiently so that we could make a reasoned judgment of what to put in and what to take out. Too much time spent on Kant’s interminable organizational scheme, the Architectonic, and we would not have space to summarize the important arguments. Too much space devoted to one argument, and we would be unable to find room for the others. Shorter would have been easier, because there would have been room only to skim the surface; longer, and we could have paraphrased every sentence without making the judgments that grew out of genuine understanding. By the time we reached the third week, which was devoted to the chapter entitled The Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding, we were so deep into Kant’s language and mind that the rest of the world simply fell away.

It was for me a completely transformative experience. I had finally come upon a mind so powerful, so profound, so precise that I could throw myself against it with all my force, secure that it would withstand me. The three months I devoted to the study of the *Critique* changed my entire life. It is not too much to say that whatever philosophical insight I have achieved, whatever contribution I have made to human knowledge, began in C. I. Lewis' Philosophy 130 in the Spring of 1953.

As I struggled with the Deduction of the Categories, as that pivotal chapter has come to be known, I would think from time to time of a wonderfully evocative phrase in the liner notes written by Alan Lomax for the first album recorded by Leadbelly. Huddie Ledbetter was a hard-driving man, twice convicted of murder and twice reprieved by governors who heard him sing. During his time in prison on brutal Southern chain gangs, Leadbelly would work under the blazing sun all day, and then play for the prisoners and guards at night. Lomax had this to say about him. "Leadbelly, himself, was like the gray goose, indomitable, tougher than life, itself. In the Texas pen he was the number one man in the number one gang on the number one farm in the state." That description became for me the epitome of what it was to be *big league*. The Deduction of the Categories was clearly the most difficult passage in the hardest book by the greatest philosopher who ever lived – the number one man in the number one gang on the number one farm in Texas. Before too many years had gone by, I would attempt to master that passage, to wrestle it all night until it would yield to me.

What did Lewis do in class that convinced each of us of the greatness of the course? Some years after he retired, a group of us pooled our class notes in an attempt to capture the quintessence of the experience, but the effort was a failure, because there wasn't much there. Was it the summaries, then? Did it really matter that it was Lewis teaching the course? I mulled over this question a good deal, and finally came to a conclusion that I am convinced is correct, at least for me.

In the Harvard department at that time, there were two groups of professors. Quine, Aiken, and White were brilliant, but they treated philosophy as a fascinating game, an

opportunity to deploy their splendid intelligence on a challenging and difficult terrain. John Wild and Donald Williams were serious, intense philosophers for whom the philosophical calling mattered deeply, but they couldn't think their way out of a paper bag. Lewis was the exception. He was rigorous, logical, brilliant, but also passionately committed to what he was doing. Though it would have mortified him ever to say so, he clearly believed that it was *morally* unacceptable to be anything less than perfectly clear and precise in one's philosophical reasoning. I rather imagine that his politics were a hundred eighty degrees from mine, but he radiated a sense of moral seriousness that I admired and have tried ever since to emulate.

At the end of the undergraduate course in the Fall, I had submitted a paper tearing apart Hume's arguments on something or other. Lewis treated my efforts very gently, and after remarking that "in this paper, it would be out of place to ask that [the points] should 'add up' to something in conclusion," he wrote, "I should hope that this general character of the paper is not a symptom of that type of mind, in philosophy, which can find the objection to everything but advance the solution to nothing." For the past half century, I have sought to live up to that hope, and I should like to think that if he were alive today, C. I. Lewis would conclude that I had not entirely failed.

As a senior going for honors, I registered for "Tutorial for Credit" in the Fall and looked about for a topic for my senior honors thesis. The department assigned me to Hao Wang, because it was universally assumed that I would do a logic thesis. I realize now that I was being prepped as the next in the line of Quine's protégés, following after Hao Wang himself, and Bert Dreben, a former member of the Society of Fellows who was then an Assistant Professor in the department.

But what to work on? Wang handed me a RAND Corporation monograph by the famous logician Alfred Tarski called "A Decision Method for Elementary Geometry," suggesting that I write my thesis on it. I took it back to my room and started working through it. Tarski said in the Introduction that his decision method was an extension of something called Sturm's Theorem, which turned out to be a theorem about the number of real roots of a polynomial. I

had no idea at all what I was doing, but I labored over the monograph and after several months actually understood it well enough to write a ten page exposition of the argument. I made an appointment with Wang and went to see him.

Wang was a shy man, and did not like to make eye contact with me when he talked. After I handed him my ten pages and asked what I was to do next, he looked up at a corner of the high-ceilinged room in Hunt Hall, a circular building mostly inhabited by architecture students, and said to me, "Put it through in an axiom system." Then he sent me away.

When I sat down at my desk to begin work, I realized that I hadn't the foggiest idea what I was supposed to do. Put it through in an axiom system. What did that mean? Put what through in an axiom system? What axiom system? I was utterly stymied. But I was too embarrassed and ashamed by my manifest inadequacy to go back to Wang and ask for some sort of clarification. I had, after all, taken every advanced logic course offered in the department. If I had no idea what Wang was talking about, it could only mean that I was a complete fraud as a logic student.

I thought seriously about not writing an honors thesis, but there was a problem: I had decided to graduate in three years, for which I needed thirty-two courses. The two semesters of tutorial for credit that I was taking would count as courses only if I actually produced a thesis. Otherwise, I would not graduate. For a while, I simply sat and stewed, anguishing about the situation without making any progress toward a solution. By now it was after Christmas, and I was getting panicky. Finally, I went to see Professor White, who had always struck me as the one genuinely sane and approachable member of the department. I blurted out my problem, and after listening for a while, he undertook to calm me down.

I had just completed his course on Analytic Philosophy, had I not? Yes. And for that course I had read the new book just published by Gilbert Ryle, *Concept of Mind*, was that not true. Yes. Very well, White suggested, write an honors thesis on *Concept of Mind*. He offered to take over from Wang as my advisor for the Spring semester.

I did in the end produce an honors thesis on Ryle, a journeyman effort of 53 pages,

elegantly typed by my mother. I still had to pass the second semester German exam, and I was mindful of a story my father liked to tell about *his* German exam in college. It seems that the class was given a passage to translate, in which my father recognized only one word somewhere in the middle. So he constructed an entire fanciful translation around that one word. The Instructor was entranced by this manifestation of creativity, and flunked him. Fearful that “like father, like son” would be my downfall, I got English translations of all the texts we were going to be tested on, and virtually memorized them. I squeaked through with a B.

Each year, the Harvard chapter of *Phi Beta Kappa* chose twelve outstanding students to be inaugurated into the society at the end of their Junior year. One of my fellow philosophy majors from the Class of ‘54, Ronald Dworkin, was tapped for Junior Phi Bete, and inasmuch as C. I. Lewis was retiring and had been chosen by them to be their speaker at the inauguration ceremonies, Ronnie was deputized to visit the old man and issue the formal invitation. As Ronnie later told the story, he went to Lewis’ office and presented the society’s invitation, but Lewis sadly declined, saying that as he himself had never been elected to *Phi Beta Kappa*, he did not think it was appropriate for him to serve as their speaker. Ronnie told us that he wept inwardly and wanted to blurt out, “It’s all right, Clarence, you have made up for it.” But he simply nodded and left. I cannot recall now, but I think it must be the case that Charlie Parsons, whose name I had so shamelessly used two years earlier, was also Junior Phi Bete.

In Adams House, I had fallen in with a group of seniors with whom I ate dinner many evenings. As the Spring progressed, we would sit around the table and engage in a competition to see who could express with more histrionic panache our fears concerning honors. I would say, with exaggerated anguish, “Ah, if I could only get a *cum*.” Wally, who was well on his way to the Nobel Prize he would one day win in Biology, and whom the world has since come to know as Walter Gilbert, would reply, “Just let me graduate.” Then Benny would speak up. “Well! I won’t be satisfied with anything less than a *summa*.”

The *Reader’s Digest* used to have little features known as “the most unforgettable character I have ever known.” Benjamin Muckenhoupt was, without a doubt, far and away by

many orders of magnitude the strangest person I have ever come across. To squeeze it all into a phrase, Benny was a tall, skinny, miserly albino piccolo playing mathematician who was a fanatical lover of trolley cars. He used to claim that with one fare plus transfers, he could in the old days have made it all the way from Boston to New York. AS you may imagine, Benny did not have the most active social life, but his friend Bob Funk, who was from North Attleboro [home of Joe Martin, Speaker of the House of Representatives], fixed Benny up one weekend with a girl from his home town. All of us waited breathlessly to hear how the date had gone. As expected, Benny took the young thing for a trolley ride, but was very put out when she wanted to get off to get a coke, as this would have necessitated the purchase of a new ticket. But the laugh was on us. When she got back to North Attleboro, she wrote to tell Funk how much she had enjoyed meeting Benny.

As Commencement approached, the emotional core of my life disintegrated. Susie announced that she was engaged to be married to someone named Gordon Hirschhorn that summer. I was heartbroken, and stumbled around Harvard Yard, trying to keep myself together long enough to pass my German exam so that I could at least graduate. There had been problems; we had semi-broken up at the beginning of the year, but then we had gotten back together, and I blindly assumed that all was well. Her news caught me completely unprepared.

We have talked about the breakup in recent years. Here is the very best face I have been able to put on the matter. Susie's father had suffered a heart attack that forced him to retire from his job at Hearn's. She was terribly concerned about their ability to pay for her college education, and believed that she should make herself financially independent of them as soon as possible. Gordon was the son of a fabulously wealthy Canadian uranium king [it was he who endowed the Hirschhorn Museum in Washington, D. C.] and Gordon would have no trouble supporting her. So they were married, and lived together while she finished her last year at Conn College. During the next year, while I was beginning graduate school, she came to visit me, and although nothing happened between us, I came away with the very powerful sense that she was still drawn to me. As the cliché of contemporary soap operas has it, "she still had feelings for me, and had

not moved on.” God knows, I still had feelings for her! I would have made up with her in an instant if she had given me the opening.

A private cloud hung over my head during graduation week because of my loss of Susie. Though it was a lovely late Spring week, in my memory of it the weather is always overcast. The big news was the appointment of a new President to take the place of Conant. The Harvard Corporation’s choice was Nathan Marsh Pusey, the President of Lawrence College, who had distinguished himself by standing up to Joe McCarthy’s red-baiting investigations. As I sat in the Yard preparing to graduate with the class of ‘53, I watched the members of the class of ‘28 returning for their Twenty-Fifth Reunion. With their straw hats and wives and children, they looked hopelessly middle-aged and uninteresting. When the surviving members of the class of ‘03 marched into Commencement, they seemed to me to be unimaginably ancient – creatures of another age, born in the 1880’s, too young for the Spanish-American War and too old for World War I. What could they possibly understand of the world I inhabited?

Now, all too soon, here I am, as ancient and distant to the graduating class of 2004 as those relics were to me. And yet, I feel young, lively, alert, well aware of the world around me. Is it possible that those ‘03 graduates felt the same way? When the class of 2004 returns for its fiftieth, as it surely will, it will share a moment in the Yard with the class of 2054. Then they will have the experience I am now having, and a few may even wonder what the class of 2104 will think of them as they return for *their* fiftieth!

My So-Called Senior Year

I had been admitted to the Harvard doctoral program in Philosophy, with a scholarship the first year of \$1475, out of which I would have to pay the \$600 tuition and live for a year. I had told Harvard in my application that I needed a minimum of \$1500, and wondered idly whether the award was some sort of extremely subtle attempt to get rid of me, but I fooled them by accepting, and began graduate school.

My first year was an almost seamless continuation of my undergraduate career, coming as it did in what would normally have been my senior year. At the end of the year loomed the

dreaded Prelims, four three hour closed book examinations on Logic, the History of Philosophy, Ethics, and Metaphysics and Epistemology. Not all doctoral students took the Prelims at the end of their first year, but I had already taken seventeen courses in the department, and it was a little hard to see how I could sustain even as much as an additional year of courses before completely running out of things to take.

Like many senior years, this one was a considerable letdown, made all the worse by the disappearance of Susie from my life. I tried dating, mostly girls who were themselves philosophy majors, but there was no bolt of lightning like the one that had struck me in Sophomore high school home room. I went out a few times with Shirley Johnson, a superbly intelligent young woman who had the great misfortune to look like the Nebraska Homecoming Queen. Every time some sandy-haired mid-Western Harvard boy saw her apple-cheeked, blond good looks at a Radcliffe mixer, he started to dream of picket fences, gingham aprons, and 4-H club meetings. Shirley was forever fending them off. She went on to study economics at Columbia, where she had one of those nightmare experiences that are the worst fear of every dissertation writer. When she turned in a complete draft, her director told her that it was splendid, all save the last chapter, which had to go. The second reader said that there wasn't anything worth saving in the thesis except for the last chapter, which he recommended she expand into an entire dissertation. It took her several years to negotiate her way to a doctorate. The last I noticed, she was a Professor at Vassar.

We were all in love with Adria Holmes, a slender, exquisitely beautiful woman with a precise, graceful mind. Her father was a Philosophy professor who had invented a machine with which you could, by turning a crank, test the validity of a syllogism. I never actually got a date with Adria.

Wesley Piersoll was a tall, spectacular blond who had been Miss Radcliffe her Freshman year. I went dancing with Wesley, but I was not even in the running. Several years later, she went off to Switzerland and lived for a while in a convent near the French border, reading Existentialist philosophy. She published a book on Louis Lavelle, but I never found out whether

she managed a career as a philosopher.

I also dated Carol Handler, who was close to red-haired Joan Friendly, the daughter of Henry J. Friendly, then a senior partner in a New York law firm, but later a very distinguished Federal Appeals Court judge. Carol took me along one day to a Sunday brunch at the Friendly apartment on Park Avenue, where Mr. Friendly was hard at work on a briefcase full of papers. Right then and there, I decided that if that was what happened to you at the top of the law game, I wanted no part of it.

My first graduate year also saw the reappearance of Barbara in my life. She was doing graduate work in Biochemistry at Harvard, and had joined a coop house of foreign and American students just north of the Law School, near the grad dorms where I was living. She persuaded me to become an eating member of the house, and for a year, I would have dinners there and share in the cooking.

They were a fascinating mix of people, much more cosmopolitan than any I had ever met: Liesje Boosenkool, Zsu-Zsa Vietorisz, Tommy Reiner, Georg Ishikawa [he called himself Georuku because Georg is hard for Japanese to pronounce, but his name really was Georg – his father was a German professor in Tokyo.] The high point was a party which the science students spiked with 200 proof laboratory alcohol. It had no taste but made you ferociously thirsty. At 2 a.m, a group of people went swimming in Walden Pond. The low point came one evening when Georg and I were doing the cooking. As I recall, we were making boiled hot dogs and acorn squash. Since none of us had a car, the coop had rented out the garage. While we were getting ready to serve dinner, someone came in and announced that our garage tenant had turned on his engine and committed suicide in the closed garage. The dinner was not a success.

My accommodation in William James Hall was a considerable comedown from the gracious suites of the Harvard houses. It was a small rectangular room constructed from cinder blocks, with the result that when the student next door smoked, some of it filtered through the walls. My room was on the ground floor, which was actually a half-story below ground level. As I studied, I could look up into the eyes of a squirrel foraging for nuts right outside my

window. But the grad dorms did have a t.v. set in the common room, and I spent some hours watching the McCarthy/Army hearings, in which Joe McCarthy harassed a sweating Army Secretary Stevens, dressed in a white suit. I actually saw the famous moment when Joseph Welch, the Army counsel, who was outraged by McCarthy's attempt to smear one of his young associates, turned on the Senator and in a voice of quiet but magisterial outrage, said, "At long last, Senator, have you no decency?" McCarthy was stunned, and had the saving grace to look thoroughly ashamed.

In the Spring, Lewis, who was now retired and living in Menlo Park, California, returned to give a lecture to the department. All of the students turned out to honor him, and even his former colleagues showed up, a considerable rarity for a Harvard Philosophy Department talk. Lewis had loomed so large in the department, that many of the young Turks, especially Quine and Aiken, rather resented him, and had been happy to see him go. At the end of the lecture, when the applause started, I stood up, which more or less forced Aiken, Quine and the others into a standing ovation. Aiken was very put out, and gave me a furious look.

The combination of the breakup with Susie and the letdown after the intensity of my undergraduate experience triggered a crisis of confidence in me, both about the career I had chosen and about my ability to pursue it. I read *Moby Dick* and *The Fountainhead* and wrote long letters home, anguishing over my future. This was the pre-dawn of the computer era, and there were vague rumors that students with logic training could make careers for themselves outside the Academy. I even went to the Harvard Placement Office and signed up for an interview with the C. I. A. I was given a slip of paper directing me to a downtown Boston building, and when I found my way to the door, I discovered that there was no sign of any sort identifying it as a government location. Inside was a room absolutely empty save for a single desk, behind which sat a man in a suit. We talked for a while, and then he asked me what my glasses prescription was. I said 20/400, and he shook his head. If my eyes were no worse than 20/200, he said, he could get me a reserve commission in the Army, which would exempt me from the draft, but with 20/400, it was out of the question. That was the end of the interview.

Before I left, he had me sign a piece of paper swearing that I would reveal nothing that had transpired. Since nothing *had* transpired, this struck me as a bit of cloak-and-dagger theatrics. As I was opening the door to leave, I had the odd sense that if I had whirled about suddenly, the man and the desk would have disappeared.

To prepare for the Prelims, I started systematically reviewing everything I had learned in the preceding four years, even reading major and minor works in the History of Philosophy that I had somehow managed to skip over. The night before the first exam, which was on the History of Philosophy, I cast about for something more to do, and hit on a book that Demos had written on Plato some years earlier. As I had by now reduced my lecture notes to outlines, my outlines to 3 x 5 cards, and my 3 x 5 cards to keywords, I read through the first chapter, and tried to get some sleep. The next morning, when the exams were handed out, I discovered that the first question had been taken right out of Chapter One of Demos' book. It seemed that the Gods were smiling.

For another week and a half, I sat the exams in Logic, Ethics, and Metaphysics and Epistemology. Then I staggered back to the grad dining commons, bought two large paper cups of beer, downed them both, and fell face down on my bed. At long last, my undergraduate education was over.