For the past several years America has been engaged in a fierce debate about whether it has any shared values upon which to build a unified community. While many liberals, on civil liberties grounds, have resisted the imposition of values and have championed the notion that values may be context-bound, subjective, and relative, Tikkun *has taken a different perspective, insisting that a transformative social vision must base itself on a foundational ethics that transcends individual differences.*

That debate has taken a unique form in the academy, where university professors have debated the legitimacy of continuing a single "Western Civilization" requirement that would impose one particular set of books as "the canon" of Western thought. Feminists, Blacks, and Jews have been amongst those who have pointed to the class, race, sex, and religious biases of those who have helped create this "canon." The debate at Stanford, in particular, received national attention, and Professor Arnold Eisen describes how the conflict affected him.

The problems raised by the whole issue of a shared literature are made even more acute when we listen to Professor Hannan Hever describe how this notion has been used in Israel as a way to delegitimate the cultural contributions of Palestinian authors. Hever's piece provides an important perspective and warning for those of us who wish to develop an alternative canon that would, presumably, at some point become authoritative.

Jews, Jewish Studies, and the American Humanities

Arnold Eisen

Stanford University has received more than its fair share of national media attention these past three years—principally because of the debate over its required core curriculum in "Western culture." I was greeted by the opening salvos of that debate during my very first days on campus in 1986, and the argument is still front-page news in the *Stanford Daily* (and grist for national editorial columns) as I write, in the summer of 1989.

I observed the discussion as a professing Jew and a professor of Judaism; what is more, I came to it engaged in establishing a new program in Jewish studies. The debate made several questions about the program's prospects particularly urgent. For example, how does one teach a religious tradition built around books, and the history of a people known universally as the "people of the book," at a place where the centrality of texts has been collectively repudiated? Moreover, would there be room for the dispassionate study of a culture that reeks of authority, hierarchy, exclusivism, and "God-talk" in a setting where all of these things are widely denounced as not only anachronistic but pernicious? I do not affirm any faith claims when I teach the history of Judaism, any more than I affirm Marx or Nietzsche when teaching their thought. But I do enter into my subject as sympathetically as possible. More important, I take its claims with utmost seriousness. Religion, for many of my colleagues outside religious studies, is at best antiquarian, at worst a breeding ground for fanaticism. Would that be their attitude toward Jewish studies as well? Could students be brought to take seriously what the majority of their professors might not?

And yet: would there be room for Jewish studies at all in the American university were it not for parallel efforts to establish Black studies, feminist studies, and Chicano studies—efforts spearheaded by many of the very people who find my commitments so retrograde? Indeed, would there be room for the Jewish tradition in any conception of Western culture not fractured by modernity and modernism—fractured in part by Jews struggling for space within its confines? Such questions pose themselves still more concretely. What am I to do with the fact that my liberal political allies often speak a cultural language that I find profoundly disturbing (as in the Stanford debate), while other people, whose politics I oppose, articulate a way of being and teaching that stirs me deeply? I have been welcomed warmly at Stanford, and Jewish studies too has been greeted with enthusiasm. The program symbolizes inclusiveness,

Arnold Eisen is an associate professor of religious studies at Stanford University.

growth, cosmopolitanism. A Jew, of course, rejoices at being at home in a place like Stanford; but he or she cannot easily take "yes" for an answer, and soon wonders whether home is really a good place for Jews to be. The debate about the curriculum at Stanford, then, brought me quickly to the deepest paradoxes of Jewish life in the modern world. The baggage of the last two centuries had trailed me to Palo Alto.

Hence the following meditation which arises out of events at Stanford, responds to Allan Bloom and other commentators on American higher education, and articulates the dilemmas of a self-consciously modern Jewish professor of Judaism. I am looking for a place to stand, if such a place exists, in the American academy of our day. I search for balance.

Stanford

Item: I read in the October 8, 1986, issue of *Campus Report*—the faculty/staff newspaper at Stanford—that Clayborne Carson, associate professor of history and Afro-American studies, has questioned whether the focus of the core curriculum "should be on Western culture at all." It is not enough, he argues, to note that such a course excludes "most of the world's population that doesn't happen to be Western, doesn't happen to be Christian, doesn't happen to have developed in the same ways that this country has developed.... [I]t's not enough to simply say that these groups should be included and maybe we should have some [class] sections off to the side." Perhaps, instead, we should change what stands at the center, move "toward a world culture requirement, one that would begin to expose students to the cultural diversity that exists in the world today."

I am, up to a point, sympathetic to this argument; but beyond that point I find myself profoundly hostile. On pedagogic grounds, the proposal is unworkable: how can one study everything, or even many things, and avoid superficiality? Furthermore, on philosophical grounds, I am unwilling to give up on the notion of a common culture that unites us as Americans, however mythic the usable past, however many wrongs have been perpetrated in the name of that myth. America began and developed out of a commitment to a particular set of ideas that thereby demand and deserve our continuing engagement. Students *should* be exposed to cultures other than their own, and exposed in depth; but I find it inconceivable for us to allow anyone to graduate without having read Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Marx, Freud—precisely the sort of thinkers on the core list, which Carson urges us to eliminate. These thinkers continue to shape our social and political thought—indeed, they shape the very debate over curriculum in which we are engaged. Could we really certify as educated a student who had not confronted them?

And yet, of course, I am a Jew, which means in this instance that Carson's words immediately strike a sympathetic chord. Resentment at the pretensions of Western (read: Christian) culture to universality is well known to me. I remember arguing repeatedly with my fellow teachers of Contemporary Civilization at Columbia—CC being the source for Stanford's core curriculum, and many others—over whether the Bible, let alone Maimonides, deserved inclusion on the list. "There are no arguments there," a graduate student in philosophy objected. An eminent historian did my cause no good by arguing before this same group that the Bible should be included by dint of its legacy to the West: genocide, persecution of witches, abhorrence of homosexuals. But, damn it (my anger is easily recalled), what of the fact that a majority of the world's Jews, Christians, and Muslims continue to find their deepest meaning rooted in the Bible? What of its importance for Western cultures, elite and popular alike, for two millennia? The Bible remained on the list. But, except for my section, no postbiblical Jew ever appeared.

Still, Western culture is part of my inheritance now. I treasure the CC list, even if it excludes me, as I treasure Melville and Hawthorne, Jefferson and Lincoln. I want my students to treasure them too. Hence my reaction to Carson's proposal: I stand with him—but I also stand against him.

Item: John Perry, professor of philosophy, one of the architects of the old Western culture curriculum, and soon to be a principal advocate of its replacement with CIV—"Cultures, Ideas, Values"—makes two comments, in reply to Carson, that underlie many critiques of the core. First, we probably do not possess the works of the truly great philosophers, because to be a philosopher means to pick holes in arguments, including one's own. Perry says: "So maybe the best philosopher that ever lived never got around to writing anything, because every time he wrote something he said, You know, that's not quite right." Perry is not speaking entirely seriously, I grant, but the message conveyed is serious indeed. To do philosophy, by his definition, means above all to pick arguments apart, not to put them together. It means, in a word, to be critical. Second, Perry argues, the problem of relativism will not go away: "There is no way to have knowledge, to perceive anything, to think anything, to read anything except from a perspective. You can't step out of your perspective.... There are ways of overcoming relativism, but it's not necessarily easy."

Perry set his students face to face with one of the thorniest issues of our time, and left them where the university generally leaves them: in doubt. All claims to truth do strike us as suspicious. Scientific detach-

ment enters into our daily decisions; unprecedented self-consciousness bedevils and enriches our personal relationships; suspicion is part and parcel of our lives. Taken together, Perry's two points are particularly devastating. In the name of truth, all truth must be "picked apart." Yet all truth, including this one, is contingent, perspectival, by no means absolute.

Where does this combination of criticism and relativism leave us? For the average Stanford student, Perry's culture of criticism is far from enough—particularly since we can no longer expect students to arrive on campus armed with commitments from home, school, or church that we can refine (and so preserve) through criticism. Integral communities are in short supply in America these days, and so are the deep-seated commitments that they once fostered. "Values" are easily exchanged and sloughed off—a process not always salutary if nothing coherent is around to replace them.

The deep dilemmas that afflict our culture find graphic expression in the university curricula as well. Take the catalogue of courses, for example, which stands before the student symbolically as the sum total of human knowledge. We ask undergraduates to choose from among thousands of courses without the benefit of much structure or advising (except in the sciences, where course work is very highly structured indeed). At best an ordered collection of courses results, at worst intellectual vertigo. Students quickly realize that the faculty members are unable to agree on what is worth knowing or teaching. These students learn almost as quickly that anything held worthwhile by some group at some time has been reviled by other societies and cultures. By finals week of fall quarter, freshman year, all have discovered that critical skills are what is rewarded in the academy, while claims to truth are treated as suspect both in the classroom and in the dorm.

A person committed to Judaism cannot help being disturbed by this pervasive relativism. For the Jewish tradition, despite the enormous diversity it contains, is united in the belief that (I quote Martin Buber, far from an Orthodox Jew!) "there is truth and there are lies ... there is right and [there is] wrong." Universities today write moral statements, if they write them at all, only in lowercase, surrounded by quotation marks, in the form of open questions.

In the end, the Western culture debate resulted in a compromise that includes a sort of core composed of texts or issues while mandating consideration of gender, race, and class. Contemplating this result, I reflected that Jews had traded an integral communal culture in return for participation as individuals in a very rough but quite fragmented Western culture. Jewish studies had arrived at nearly every major university in America, and at many minor ones, but literacy in Jewish texts, except among a small elite, had become a thing of the past. Universities for their part had been democratized and opened to influences other than the dominant culture. Hence the presence of Jews and Judaism. But here, too, much had been lost: a sense of collective direction, the ability to tell our students what matters and what does not, the confidence that we assist in the building of a common national culture. Perplexed, I read *Campus Report* week by week, argued with colleagues, went to meetings, and became still more perplexed. Enter at that point Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987)—an attempt, outrageous but compelling, to guide me (us) through the complexity. It served as a sort of silent partner to inner dialogue, prompting in the end a very different vision of the humanities, and of Jewish studies.

The American Mind

My experience may be atypical, but I have rarely heard *The Closing of the American Mind* treated seriously. Reviews have tended either to relish Bloom's bashing of liberal culture or to bash right back with similar abandon. Discussions at the university have more often than not sought to account for the book's popularity—itself a sign of ill-repute among academics—rather than to attempt to engage Bloom's arguments. I find this response curious. There is much in the book that is on the mark, even if there is also a great deal that is doubtful, patently wrong, and even (as with attacks on figures such as Margaret Mead) downright puerile.

The object of Bloom's critique is not higher education at all, but rather the society and culture that our universities reflect and serve. Note, first, that Bloom insists—like the tradition in which he places himself, like the tradition in which I place myself—on discourse about the soul. One is immediately forced to take sides. Either this sort of language is merely quaint, or it is utterly serious. Bloom's essay is awash with "soul" and other archaisms of similar import. "The teacher ... must constantly try to look toward the goal of human completeness." "The real motive of education" is "the search for a good life." And, in a moving personal confession, which I willingly echo:

> [T]he substance of my being has been informed by the books I learned to care for.... I have had teachers and students such as dreams are made [of]. And most of all I have friends with whom I can share thinking about what friendship is, with whom there is a touching of souls and in whom works that common good of which I have just spoken.

This is the discourse of Aristotle, and of Jewish texts

such as Pirke Avot. It is not, to say the least, the contemporary language of the academy.

This is so for two reasons. First, Western philosophy since Kant has not managed to assent even to the limited claims to knowledge and truth left standing in the wake of Kant's critiques. Where Bloom presupposes "that there is a human nature, and that assisting its fulfillment is [the teacher's] task," much recent work in the humanities assumes that every notion of human nature is an artificial construct, and inquires into its origins and purpose. Similarly, where Bloom makes reason the principal instrument of human fulfillment, philosophers in the West from Hegel onward have taught us to doubt reason. Hegel himself, charting the purported progress of reason through history, serves only to highlight reason's cultural particularity. Marx teaches us how seemingly universal notions have often served the interests of specific classes; Freud makes the fragility of reason all too obvious. Bloom himself places this development even earlier than Kant: "Having cut off the higher aspirations of man, those connected with the soul, Hobbes and Locke hoped to find a floor beneath him, which Rousseau removed. Man tumbled down into what I have called the basement, which now appears bottomless." We need not accept Bloom's putative history, or mine, to recognize that old-fashioned talk of human nature seems out of place in today's university.

"Soul" and similar terms are excluded for a second reason as well: our emphasis on material forces in history. Bloom has the habit of attributing all historical development to the history of ideas. Thus he regards the loss of a "floor," of a firm grounding for our beliefs and our lives, as the crucial determinant of modernity. Here we were, his story goes, about to embark on the distinctively modern project of mastering the world for the benefit of the human species, but the enormous energies unleashed from the Reformation to the Enlightenment could not propel us—for we no longer possessed a sense of direction to tell us where to go.

Critics have correctly observed that Bloom's shorthand history is inaccurate. Economic, political, and sociological developments cannot be captured by the history of ideas, let alone by the history of the ideas contained in a few works judged by Bloom to be epochal. Other voices had their say; other forces were at work. Hence the disrepute at present of the history of ideas, and the crucial role of this issue in the Stanford debate. Bloom, in a sense, argues as follows: If truth, wisdom, and goodness exist, we should certainly be seeking them; if reason is the best way to conduct that search, perfection of reason should be our overriding educational aim. Universities should be conducted accordingly. Methodological questions about history are irrelevant. To which his critics retort: If Bloom has ignored many if not most American minds in his rush to judge our moral situation, if his causal sequence is utterly simplistic, if indeed he has ignored the institutional history of the American university (the move from liberal arts colleges serving a limited clientele of gentlemen to research universities entangled in a variety of societal interests and serving a broad mix of constituencies), then his formulation of the questions facing higher education is inadequate. And, besides, Bloom's critics continue, the forces that want to speak of "soul" in the old-fashioned way usually bear agendas out of keeping with the critical function served by the university.

We are left, then, with the question of what the role of the university should be. Or, in Max Weber's terms, what is the vocation of scholarship?

Recent literature tends toward one of two positions on this question. On the one hand, voices from the left and right alike propose a reinvigoration of the purist educational model of the university. Jacques Barzun, once the provost at Columbia, puts it this way: "Students learn, teachers teach and learn some more." More direct involvements with society—including those aimed at public service—are to be avoided. Paul Goodman, whose classic *The Community of Scholars* (1962) continues to move me greatly, urges that we view colleges and universities as the only face-to-face, self-governing communities still active in modern society. Students and faculty may come to their shared community with different agendas, but the essence of their activity is personal relation and personal growth. Clark Kerr, former chancellor at the University of California at Berkeley, urges that we "pay [our] devotions to truth."

How valid is this purist view? I ask this question for several reasons. First, the contemporary research university is far from a detached ivory tower. Not only do its investments support all sorts of corporate activity, and not only do its researchers perform the bidding of countless government agencies, but its faculty members tend more and more to hold equity in or serve as consultants to outside companies. The web of connections between university, on the one hand, and government and industry, on the other, is far too dense for any pure teacher-student relationship to slip through without entanglement.

Second, recent work in the philosophy of social science has cast serious doubt upon the premise of value-neutral research and teaching. The university cannot help but take a stand on the issues of the day, if only by deciding in which to interfere, which to scrutinize. Moreover, the very construction of our disciplines, our notion of what is worth knowing and teaching, contains assumptions that others might find highly questionable.

Third—and most relevant to the present discussion—the university itself usually proclaims a desire to further the *particular* values and institutions of American society. The Commission on the Humanities, for example, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation at the start of this decade, spoke of the twin goals of personal enrichment and civic responsibility—language often found in the self-description of contemporary universities, including my own. It urged professors to "prepare students for citizenship by teaching the democratic values that have shaped the American heritage."

I am unwilling to give up on the notion of a common culture that unites us as Americans.

The view espoused by many of Bloom's critics is summarized in the American Council of Learned Societies' (ACLS) Report on the Humanities, which appeared this year in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The report opposes any vision of

> disciplines governed by a gentlemanly ideal: a vision of the humanities as repository of known truths and received values, which a non-professional corps of collectors present to the young. The humanities are better conceived as fields of exploration and critique rather than materials for transmission. If such a view promotes a divided and contentious future it is, we believe, an engaging and productive one.

A distinctly modernist credo, this, a celebration of freedom from the constraints of consensus. It is the "lust for knowledge, unsatisfied delight in discovery, tremendous secularization, homeless roving" that Nietzsche prophesied in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The message is succinct: criticize, by all means explore, but do not seek to serve a culture except by exposing it and everything else to relentless criticism.

I find this view disturbing. Like Bloom, I do not advocate that we begin to teach civics at Stanford or that we sacrifice one iota of our critical function to patriotism. One can maintain academic freedom at the same moment as one places the intellectual inside our common culture, as part of our society. This is a matter of tone, of ethos, as much as of substance; but substance too is often at issue. Note for example the notion of tradition as dead letter opposed by free spirit, which permeates the ACLS report. This idea is a staple of modernist ideology, a far cry from the dialectic of creativity and authority that characterizes every living tradition I know of.

Bloom is on firm ground, it seems to me, in urging the university to be critical of the culture of criticism that surrounds and infuses it. Moreover, his impressionistic account of the ethos of American life accords, despite his lack of "hard" evidence, both with other "soft" accounts such as *Habits of the Heart* (1985) or *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) and with survey data collected by Daniel Yankelovich and Herbert Gans. All confirm what Bloom calls the "dreary spiritual landscape" of all too many American families. The nation does have its Falwells and the world its ayatollahs; academic freedom must still be safeguarded. But it is now the modernists who stand with the most powerful cultural forces in our society, and who reinforce the antitraditional tendencies of our culture, high and low.

Bloom's proposals for reform are far less satisfactory than his critique. He has virtually no answer to our dilemmas beyond great books and a commitment by our cultural elite to the Greek academy's pursuit of truth through reason. That vision of higher education must be adapted to the realities of the far more democratic American system. No self-respecting Jew, certainly, can endorse the "gentlemanly ideal," which had no room for Jews; I suspect that no democrat (small "d") can either. We must try to do better than Bloom.

On one matter, however, Bloom seems correct: humanists will regain their former primacy in the university only if they can come to some agreement on what is worth knowing and why. Scientists largely agree on what needs to be taught, and social scientists, too, continue to believe in and search for "the facts." The only ground for similar agreement by humanists would seem to involve commitment to shared notions of humanity and truth—notions that are not merely ethnocentric or ephemeral, even if they are not subject to rational proof either. Coming to such agreement is no easy task—but Max Weber, I believe, provides a starting point in "Science as a Vocation."

Scholarship as a Vocation

Convinced that "scientific progress is a fraction, the most important fraction, of the process of intellectualization" that had succeeded in "disenchanting" the world, Weber was no longer able to give credence to any of the reigning rationales for scholarship. Science as a path to God? That position could no longer be taken seriously. A path to meaning in life? "Who ... still believes that the findings of astronomy, biology, physics, or chemistry could teach us anything about the meaning of the world?" A way to happiness? Mere "naive optimism." The presupposition that what scholarship teaches is worth knowing, Weber argued, was itself beyond proof; this because "the various

value-spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other.... [D]ifferent gods struggle with one another, now and for all times to come." Science could not arbitrate this dispute; relativism was a hard fact of existence. And what could it mean to speak of "vocation" in a context deprived of ultimate meaning?

I find Weber a useful starting point because he *did* find a vocation for the university. People had to live somehow in the disenchanted world, and it still mattered to Weber, a Kantian to the end, that they live responsibly, doing their "damned duty." The university could help: by teaching students "inconvenient facts," helping them move toward clarity, informing them of possible ends and of the means necessary "to carry out [their] convictions practically." The university stood "in the service of self-clarification and the knowledge of interrelated facts."

"Science as a Vocation," I confess, is the most powerful essay I have ever encountered, for two reasons: it compellingly limits and challenges the religious faith I have managed to secure, and it expresses my own misgivings about the role of the university in society while nonetheless finding meaning in that role. My task as a Jew is somehow to get beyond Weber's relativism, to affirm what he could not. This task is of course assisted by scholarly criticism that exposes Weber's own blind spots and presuppositions. My task as a professor of Judaism in the university is more modest: to see if Weber's attempt to get around his own predicament may prove of use to us as well.

I begin with several easy steps suggested by the Commission on the Humanities. Suppose we reaffirm, as it does, that the ultimate point of study in the humanities is to "reflect on the fundamental question: what does it mean to be human?" Suppose we further assume that certain methods of inquiry are peculiarly well-suited to this aim, methods that the commission describes as "language, dialogue, reflection, imagination, and metaphor." Finally, let us agree with the commission that such study cannot be limited to texts, but neither can it proceed without placing great emphasis on texts. The humanities have ample room for both "elite" and "popular" culture, and our notions of the human must extend to every corner of space and time.

The first implication of these ground rules would seem to be the blurring of the very definition of humanities that the commission proposed—precisely as Weber would have wished. For if we accept Weber's notion of our shared vocation, essentially endorsed by the commission, we must grant that science is an integral part of any reflection on what it means to be human. For what it means for me to be a person cannot be asked with integrity in the absence of what physics, chemistry, and biology have to teach us, any more than it can be asked in the absence of economics, psychology, or political science.

We thus arrive at a set of curricular decisions that involve the sciences and social sciences no less than the humanities, even if we reserve to the humanities the roles of reflecting upon the inquiry as a whole and of integrating the results of the three components. We arrive, too, at a model of research that engages all the disciplines in the reflection traditionally reserved for the humanist. It is worthwhile to be as concrete as possible here. What it is to be a person depends upon knowledge about the human body. Consensus concerning such knowledge comes from the scientific disciplines; while that consensus leaves room for more than one picture of humanness, no such picture deserves our attention unless it takes "the facts" as the scientists understand them into account. The same could be said of our role as humans in the food chain or of our place as earthlings in the universe. Further, given that we are not only bodies but social beings and language users, other sorts of questions, apportioned to the social sciences and humanities, also make their claim—particularly the impact upon our reflection of the particular time and place in which we conduct it. Given, finally, that we fortunately do not have to begin this inquiry from the beginning, but are heirs to thousands of years of human speculation upon this topic, we should expose our students and ourselves to at least a sample of that treasury.

There is more than one way to pursue this end. I find all too little diversity in American higher education and only minimal attempts at curricular innovation. The reasons are not far to seek: professors are more interested in (and rewarded for) other things, while students are generally satisfied if they leave college with the foothold on the career ladder that college has promised to afford them if they can afford its tuition. No less, the question of how we should teach has fallen victim to our uncertainty about what good our teaching does. So we rarely try to make significant changes. Instead, we tinker with what we have.

This approach will not do. Undergraduate education is at present highly disorganized. Students are generally free to graduate illiterate in science and math, largely ignorant of any culture (high or low, including their own), and unable to put together, except haltingly, the jumble of facts and methods that they have encountered. Few integrative senior seminars exist to assist them; few professorial role models can point the way.

Students would be better served by more structure, more core—but structure conceived pluralistically and core that includes more than the list of ten great books that Bloom or Weber or I myself find most important.

For example, students could be offered a series of structured options, which would include all the tools that we deem necessary for thinking about the meaning of being human, and which would seek to integrate these tools. Detailed consideration would be given to the history and ideas at the root of American culture (including exposure to debate over what this history and these ideas actually are).

Students would also be required to gain knowledge of at least one other way of being human, developed in another time and place and couched in another language, which they would be required to learn. The university would insist upon basic mathematical and scientific literacy and would accord central importance to the reading and analysis of texts (for such reading has proven over the centuries its unique power to guide debate on issues of deepest importance) and to the development of analytic skills. No one would be forced into any particular option, but, having chosen it, each student would be bound by its structure. No two universities would offer exactly the same options, which would enlarge enormously the range of choice available.

Such a proposal combines a rather traditional view of the university as focused on the problem of being human (How shall we live? Where shall we find truth? What do we owe ourselves, our societies, our planet?) with an extension of the American university's insistence on science and technology as a crucial feature of that inquiry. More important, this proposal affirms the notion that universities can stand apart from the reigning certainties (and uncertainties) of their cultures and societies without pretending to be value neutral and without sacrificing their commitment to fundamental human and societal norms.

There is no place in the university for proselytizing—political, religious, or ethnic. I do not stand before my students to make them better Jews—difficult in any event because half the students who study Jewish history or texts at Stanford are not Jews. Weber was absolutely right on this score. Special pleading is incompatible with the vocation of the university. But: how sad if the deepest concerns of our students find no echo in the classroom, if any culture or thinker of depth is presented without reference to universal concerns that guide us too—friendship and love, truth and conscience, God, death, the world to come. How much sadder if this occurs in classes on religion.

I find in the Jewish tradition of history and text what Bloom finds in Plato and Aristotle: an avenue along which human wisdom can be sought and sometimes found. I hope to enable my students to discover, as Paul Goodman puts it in *The Community of Scholars,* "that some portion of the objective culture is after all naively their own; it is usable by them; it is humane, comprehensible and practicable, and it communicates with everything else. The discovery flashes with spirit." I am grateful that Jewish studies has become widely available to Jewish students, and I believe it no less important that Stanford offer similar opportunities to women, Blacks, Asian Americans, and other minorities who until now have placed themselves in front of the university's mirror and have found they were not there.

Jewish studies exemplifies the sorts of commitments that I have outlined, at a time in the history of the American university when these commitments face serious challenge. This is so, first of all, in the commitment to text as such. Textual study, whether the texts be "classic" or modern, involves a care for the word, a demand for depth rather than breadth, a command to go slowly where others have gone before. This is a far more traditional exercise than others in the academy, suited to—and formative of—a different sort of temper. It breathes the air of bygone ages. Some would dismiss the enterprise for that reason. I value it all the more.

The same holds true for the core list—which must always return, in the study of the Jews, to the set of texts and issues that commanded Jews for centuries. Stanford English Professor Herbert Lindenberger, in a recent account of the CIV debate, notes approvingly that no permanent core list was retained, "in order that no trace of sacrality could attach itself to this list." His essay in fact bears the title "On the Sacrality of Reading Lists." I think he is correct in his assessment—in the strict sense of sacrality, which he did not intend. I, however, would like to attach as much sacrality to the human quest for meaning as possible. I would not like to strip the academy of the trappings of sacrality that attach to it still, despite our suspicion of claims to sacredness. And if Jewish studies in particular and religious studies in general provide a critical, intellectual setting in which questions about God and ultimate meaning can be addressed, I trust that my colleagues, in the name of inclusiveness, will agree that there is room even for these disciplines.

The presence of Jews and Judaism in the academy, then, may well do more than add yet another set of courses to the catalogue and yet another set of conferences to the calendar. It may contribute to debate within the academy about the nature and purpose of humanistic learning. It may also contribute texts and perspectives to the "core curriculum" of Judaism, a product of the intellectual forces and dilemmas that the Stanford debate has come to symbolize. □