CHAPTER 1
THE PARLIAMENTARY UNIVERSITY, LIBERALISM AND LIBERAL EDUCATION

The change from the age of status to the age of choice was first made in states where the government was to a great and growing extent a government by discussion, and where the subjects of that discussion were in some degree abstract, or, as we should say, matters of principle...A free state—a state with liberty—means a state, call it republic or call it monarchy, in which the sovereign power is divided between many persons, and in which there is discussion among those persons.

--Walter Bagehot, "The Age of Discussion"

It seems not improbable that it was the engagement in this conversation (where talk is without a conclusion) that gave us our present appearance, men being descended from a race of apes who sat in talk so long and so late that they wore out their tails. Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices, to distinguish the proper occasions of utterance, and in which we acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to conversation.

--Michael Oakeshott, "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind"

The idea that what is really unique about the university is its ability to transcend conflict through rational discussion is as ancient, and as durable, as the university itself. In recent years, however, this conception has come under attack, especially from feminists, poststructuralists, and anti-liberals of various descriptions. For them, the transcending of conflict is mere co-opting of dissidence, or repressive tolerance. But interestingly, as the attack on what I am calling the parliamentary university has gained momentum, so has the contrary trend, towards a defence of such a version of the university. Habermas's defence of
communicative action, Bakhtin's dialogism, Michael Oakeshott's
elegant endorsements of 'conversation' and Richard Rorty's
endorsements of Oakeshottian conversation, Gerald Graff's
determined efforts to establish `teaching the conflicts' as
pedagogical practice in English departments; all these contribute
to a general atmosphere which is, however ambiguously, conducive
to a conception of the university as a space where problems are
solved and new syntheses worked out by communication, rational
discussion, negotiation, and so on.

Among contemporary theorists, Jurgen Habermas is unique in
the comprehensiveness and sheer tenacity of his defence of the
intrinsic rationality and emancipatory power of communication. In
English studies, Gerald Graff has, with similar single-
mindedness, defended his `teach the conflict' thesis. I begin by
focusing on these two theorists because their theories exemplify
the positions of the two fairly well differentiated groups within
the parliamentary university: perhaps we can call them the
consensus school and the conflict school. If Habermas's writing
emphasizes the primacy of a sort of benign seminar/discussion
model in the university ethos, Graff's work explores the
dividends of institutionalizing a more agonistic mode of
communication, one which lays more weight on enacted
disagreements than on encouraging rapprochement. The idea that
the chief function of the university is to stage intellectual
conflicts, as a result of which new truths are arrived at or
earlier positions fruitfully modified, has always attracted
adherents. As I argue later, this variant is close to, indeed derived from, the classic liberal position on free speech, as it is elaborated by John Stuart Mill or Walter Bagehot, or by twentieth century liberals like Karl Popper.

The distinction I have drawn between these positions tends to dissolve under close scrutiny, but is useful for purposes of analysis. In practice, proponents of `discussion,' or `the public sphere,' or `negotiated agreements' tacitly subsume the more agonistic variant under their own consensual model; on the other hand, proponents of `conflict' and 'the clash of ideas' tacitly assume that the telos of the conflict or the clash is consensus, though they tend to call the consensus `truth' (Stanley Fish's rather sensational singularity consists in the fact that he insists on calling the truth 'consensus').

There is no doubt that defenders of the parliamentary university are logically on very strong ground; the most anarchic of hostile critics, as soon as they enter the terrain of a discussion about the aims of the university, are forced to concede that in the face of varied and intractable conflicts, or incommensurable value systems, an emphasis on procedural justice or neutrality is inevitable, if the university is to be preserved at all. The occasional exception only seems to prove the rule. A writer like Jacques Derrida, during a protracted discussion of the university, never gives the impression that his critique of rationality can ever issue in any definite and tangible changes. Of course, he might consistently maintain that such changes are
the last thing he desires, but the distance he maintains from anything remotely resembling a pragmatic critique seriously diminishes the effectiveness of his argument.¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, on the other hand, with perhaps an equal aversion towards the norms of rationality and procedural justice that structure modern Western society and, by extension, the university, is altogether more scrupulous (not to say lucid) in his argument, and is led to endorse "the university as a place of constrained disagreement, of imposed participation in conflict, in which a central responsibility of higher education would be to initiate students into conflict" (Three Rival Versions, 230-31). Similarly, Bill Readings, one of the most interesting analysts of the modern university, after dismissing Gerald Graff, Habermas, and Stanley Fish as flabbily pro-consensus (despite the repeated disclaimers of all three), ends by stating his preference for "dissensus" over consensus, and urges us to be satisfied to dwell "in the ruins" of the university.² This is a desperate move: consistency is retained, and the university itself virtually demolished. The trajectory of his thought confirms the strength of the consensual position. The programmatic scepticism towards consensus of any kind must lead to the rejection of the university itself, since in the absence of a telos of consensus at least partially guaranteed by procedural fairness and formal discussion, the raison d'etre of the university disappears from view.

However, logical invulnerability alone will not save the
parliamentary university. As Newman remarked (apropos liberalism), "[m]any a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion"; and, closer to our time, Habermas's reiterated complaints that poststructuralists like Derrida and Foucault are involved in 'performative contradictions' when they attack the norms of rationality, or deny the existence of universals, cuts no ice, it appears, with these contradictory performers or their supporters. As I will argue, the university based on formal discussion and oriented towards consensus cannot survive if large numbers of scholars withhold assent from this justificatory model. As with the liberal marketplace, with which it has so much in common, and from which it may be obscurely derived, the parliamentary university only functions effectively if the 'customers' accept the rules of the marketplace of ideas. Interestingly, despite liberal thinkers' efforts to (methodologically) detach moral concerns from the workings of the market, a moral commitment to the market seems to be vital to its proper functioning; and something similar might be true of the working of the parliamentary university.³

The locus classicus of both the consensual and the conflict models, indeed of liberal freedom of speech as a whole, at any rate in the English speaking world, is of course John Stuart Mill's On Liberty, though Milton's Areopagitica is an important precursor. Though Milton was far from being a liberal, at one point in Areopagitica he makes an argument that became a stock
defence of freedom of speech. Milton, knowing that good and evil grow up together, almost inseparably, in the field of this world, refuses to "praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary" (390-91). So knowledge of the good cannot only be knowledge of the good; it has to include knowledge of evil. So censorship, even of the admittedly evil, is bad, as it precludes the possibility of human beings understanding, and judging, and rejecting evil. From Milton's argument in favour of knowing all the arguments in order to choose the good, it is a small step, or no step at all, to Mill's argument that you must know your opponent's argument as well as, or better than he does, if you are going to make a correct political or logical judgement:

He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion.... Nor is it enough that he should hear the arguments of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. This is not the way to do justice to the arguments, or bring them into real contact with his own mind. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them; who defend them in earnest, and do their very
utmost for them. He must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form; he must feel the whole force of the difficulty which the true view of the subject has to encounter and dispose of.... (On Liberty 231).

The second chapter of On Liberty relentlessly presses home arguments in favour of discussion, conflictual or otherwise. A silenced opinion may turn out to be true; even if untrue, a part of it may be true, and we ought to value that part; if an opinion is silenced without a full understanding of its constituent parts and the connection between them, we have only a prejudiced view of that opinion; and so on. Mill is insistent that ideas and opinions must be subjected to the most stringent tests, a sort of linguistic and ideological Darwinian struggle which will lead to the survival of the fittest opinions, before we rest satisfied. It was as a result of his convictions in these matters that this paradigmatic liberal recommended to other liberals a close study of the conservative Coleridge; a recommendation that was taken very seriously by both F.R. Leavis and Lionel Trilling.

Newman, though much less enamoured of the pure struggle of ideas, envisages an important place for conflict in the university:

[The university] is the place to which a thousand schools make contributions; in which the intellect may safely range and speculate, sure to find its equal in some antagonist activity, and its judge in the tribunal
of truth. It is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge. ("What is a University" 38)

Mill's emphasis on the intrinsic value of tolerance and fairness has been overshadowed by his more utilitarian and combative arguments for free speech. Moreover, Mill himself may have felt that the arguments for tolerance had been made with sufficient strength by Locke not to need extended reiteration. In our time, Stuart Hampshire has elegantly restated the argument for tolerance and fairness, and explored the relationship between these features of social life and the act of discussion:

Uniting all humanity, from the nursery to the grave, the practice of promoting and accepting arguments for and against a proposal is taken as the core of practical rationality.... It is of the essence of the procedure that the pro and the contra should both be heard and evaluated, and that the procedure should not be cut off before all the arguments are in. The discussion of an issue of practical policy is both an adversary procedure, with two sides represented, and a judicial one, because in the end a Solomonic judgement will normally be made, with the acceptance of some arguments and the dismissal of others.

The canons of rationality are here the canons of
fairness. If the full procedure of discussion, and the weighing of arguments, has not been followed, the final judgement is tainted with bias and unfairness. (Innocence and Experience 53)

Gerald Graff's position on the importance of conflict in the learning process is essentially an application of Mill's freedom of speech arguments to pedagogy in general. Like many teachers in English departments today, Graff is troubled by the 'culture wars' between the traditionalists and the radicals:

The major conflict today pits those who conceive the goal of literary study to be the promotion of literate appreciation of the traditional monuments of high culture against those who want to subject that culture and what they see as its repressive effects to a radical critique. ("The Future of Theory in the Teaching of Literature" 259)

It is not just the disagreements that worry him: it is the intransigence of the protagonists and the protractedness of the war that cause concern. (In this respect he resembles another thinker discussed later in this chapter, Alasdair MacIntyre, who is outraged by the inconclusiveness of liberal political practice, and the absence of final judgements). Graff feels that professors should not conceal or obfuscate their disagreements with each other, in order to present an authoritative exterior to their students or the public. They should, instead, enact or stage their disagreements. Students will actually learn better,
and more. They will lose their disabling awe of their teachers, and the exciting engagements between their professors will stimulate them to participate in the conflict, and thereby in the learning process, themselves;

the aim is ... to exploit the conflicts themselves as an organizing principle. In theory, such a conflict-model is what democratic pluralism claims to have stood for all along, but in fact such a model has never found institutional expression. Though many literature departments are now pluralistically diverse, few of them make use of this diversity beyond presenting students with a rich array of choices. A more functional pluralism would mean not just agreeing to differ, but to stage differences openly. ("The Future Of Theory" 261)

Graff has urged this pedagogical panacea in a variety of fora, with quite extraordinary consistency and resolution. The pattern of the argument remains more or less the same, though in later versions he appears to be more concerned with `dividends' and the public relations aspects of English teaching: he speaks of "the show business dimension" of the humanities and about the importance of "learning something from the media about the organization of representations." This follows, I think, from the marketplace paradigm that underlies his `teach the conflicts' recommendation; though it may have something to do with the rhetorical skills of his even more market oriented and public
relations-obsessed colleague, Stanley Fish, with whom he increasingly seems to share a platform from which they lambast apathetic or cowardly radicals for not hitting back at the neoconservatives.\(^5\)

Graff's position is easy to parody, largely as a result of the cynicism about higher education that has been accumulating for almost a century, if not more. It is certainly a plausible and well intentioned theory, at any rate in its earlier versions. But who, in an atmosphere saturated with antinomian fury against conventional morality, repressive tolerance, the totally administered society, the exploitation of the East by the West, racism, sexism, homophobia and so on, wants to listen to someone who thinks all or many of our problems can be solved by the verbal enactment of our disagreements? In addition, Graff's theories are peculiarly out of place in English studies; as David Bromwich points out, the idea of arriving at the truth through intellectual battles is more familiar in philosophy than in English departments.\(^6\) Finally, if Graff's proximity to Fish's superbly professional pragmatism is symptomatic rather than coincidental, as there is some reason to suppose it is, a certain scepticism about the results of `teaching the conflicts' is in order: something resembling the regular, somewhat predictable agon of the Oprah Winfrey Show rather than the Socratic dialogue that seemed to be promised may result. (/ More interesting than the details of Graff's theory, however, are the responses to his suggestions. Teaching the
conflict has been rejected, as far as I can make out, by writers across the political spectrum. Stanley Fish puts the case for teaching the conflict as a form of `soft' repression with admirable lucidity:

If conflict is made into a structural principle, its very nature is domesticated; rather than being the manifestation of difference, conflict becomes the theater in which difference is displayed and stage-managed. . . .Strange as it may seem, the effect of bringing difference into the spotlight front and center is to obscure its operation, to hide the fact that the perspective from which one thinks to spy difference is itself challengeable, partisan, conflictual, differential. ("The Common Touch" 248)

Bill Readings, upping the ante, includes Fish among the consensual theorists:

Community [for Habermas] is grounded not in organic identity but in rational communication. This in turn neatly parallels the development of the canon debate in the USA, since it is the claim that buttresses Stanley Fish's call for `business as usual' under the aegis of an interpretive community—a horizon of rational consensus rather than a cultural identity. ("For a Heteronomous Cultural Politics" 182)

However, in his rejection of Graff's theories, Readings is not very far from Fish:
Behind [Graff's] laudable desire to displace the monologic authority of disciplinary discourse lies a desire for final consensus, the consensus that would permit the determination and transmission of "the conflict" as an object of professorial discourse. ("The University Without Culture?" 478)

While Fish and Readings distrust staged pedagogical conflicts because they obscure difference or operate with a concealed orientation towards consensus, conservative critics distrust the model because it undermines the authority of the teacher. James W. Tuttleton, in a swingeing attack on Graff's programme (in the New Criterion), which he calls a "Sixties `Teach In,'" warns:

What is not going to survive the contestation, I suspect, is the traditional professor, the man or woman who thinks that literature is an art rather than a branch of politics or sociology and who wishes to present it to students as a rich, complex experience not reducible to the objectives of the radical left. ("Back to the Sixties" 33)

Tuttleton is concerned that the `lone, dissenting professor' will be overwhelmed by the endless staged conflicts, with neither the will left, nor the time, to teach literature. Frank Kermode, who would probably not think of himself as conservative, shares Tuttleton's fears about the effacement of `English' in the midst of the conflict:
Students should be made ‘articulately aware’ says Graff, ‘of the controversies surrounding them’. It is made clear that he thinks this kind of thing to be a more suitable teaching method than any of which the purpose is to get students to attend to poems. This seems to me a mischievous idea. How can these deprived students be articulate and indeed ‘aggressive’ participants in a debate about something they cannot read with interest, in terms of which, it is admitted, they have no understanding?.... What is liable to get lost in this transaction, not that it is felt to matter any more, is literature—in this case, ‘English’. ("Future of the English Literary Canon" 17)

David Bromwich, one of the few self-confessed liberals to comment on the ‘culture wars’ (there is something distinctly odd about a battle over culture fought out chiefly between conservative journalists and vaguely left-wing academics) makes perhaps the most damaging critique of Graff’s proposals. Art endures, life is brief; by analogy, the conflicts keep changing, like fashions, while (this is also Kermode’s worry) the texts remain to be read:

The timely books and articles that take a position on the conflicts are not built to last; there will be another debate, with different books and articles, for the early 1990s and the late.... such a proposal envisions a student generous enough and inquisitive
enough to thrive in any atmosphere. But suppose we imagine a student more remarkable still: one who sees just how far his or her teachers stand for *unharmonizing* points of view; who even takes pleasure in arranging mental wars between them (in which, perhaps, some perish forever); but who, far from wanting such an exchange to be formalized in every class, thinks of education as something more than a professional debate.... By the proposal we are now considering, such a student is sold short. (*Politics By Other Means* 127)

Bromwich touches also on another, less easily articulable, problem: that the traditional strength of English studies has had to do with *reading*—close reading, wide reading, a great deal of reading. With this went a certain distance from the combative *'define your terms'* style more familiar in philosophy *departments*:

Dialectical habits, a certain regimen of argumentative *moves*—these have always been a large component of the learning required among philosophers. If advanced students are now asked to exhibit these strengths at the sacrifice of all others, the tact of historical imagination will suffer greatly... (*Politics By Other Means* 188)

*Why* has *'teaching the conflicts,'* *superficially* so suited to the parliamentary *university*, *met with* so much resistance, and
from such a range of political positions? I must confess that the reason most commonly adduced, that if it is implemented there will be no place for the literary texts, does not strike me as being at all convincing. Even a cursory reading of the criticism of Leavis, Winters, Trilling, Edmund Wilson, or I.A. Richards reveals a quite extraordinary range of interests, interests that did not preclude `close reading' but, on the other hand, probably facilitated such reading.

Briefly, one kind of reading will not displace another; not, at any rate, in the people who would have read poems and novels and essays anyway. Why then do many people fear that it will do so? This can be explained, I think, in terms of an admittedly dispiriting conjuncture of events. People are, in general, reading less; at the same time, English departments have been in recent years inundated with numbers of students whose skills and aspirations would, in the past, have impelled them towards sociology or political science departments. Such students, attracted by analysis that promises both intellectual stimulation and radical social change, and bored or repelled by the negative capability Keats spoke of, the rituals of passive saturation in the mood, tone, feeling of a poem or novel that have played such a large part in the traditional English studies' approach to literature, have undoubtedly been responsible, by a sort of unintended demographic shift, for a revolution in the modes of apprehension of the discipline.'

The other reason (for opposition to Graff's suggestions),
touched on by Bromwich, is altogether more plausible. The analytical skills so prodigiously on display in the last two decades' outpouring of "Theory," partly because they resonate with the increasing instrumental rationality of even the hitherto differentiated cultural and familial worlds we live in, threaten to displace other kinds of understanding, such as the homely kinds promised as a result of "close reading," skills we can give the dignified adjectives "hermeneutic" or "phenomenological." "Teaching the conflicts" offers no space at all for less combative, less analytic kinds of understanding.

My own explanation is that both the anti-philosophizing legacy of English studies and an investment in an ongoing and complexly pleasurable agon contribute to the rejection of "teaching the conflicts." But even more important is the part played by a very tenaciously held and probably largely / unconscious view of what a "liberal education' consists in: a view that is threatened by the "professionalism' of Graff's celebration of the marketplace of ideas. This argument is explored later in this chapter.

Jurgen Habermas, though he seems to be part of the extended family of discussion theorists who have their founding charter in Mill's On Liberty, is much further from Mill than, say, Graff. On closer inspection, Luther and Kant turn out to be important, if not only, begetters of Habermas's ideas about communicative rationality in the public sphere. While Mill is, in the final analysis, empirical and utilitarian, Habermas is concerned with
metaphysical groundings and moral categorical imperatives. He seems to be located almost exactly midway between Mill's utilitarian liberalism and Kant's moral idealism. It would never have occurred to Mill to "locate a promesse de bonheur in an exchange of obscene insults," in Terry Eagleton's reductio of Habermas's project.\(^1\) Mill's emphasis on linguistic conflict is intended to issue in the 'best' ideas; for Habermas, the very situation in which verbal communication is embedded is a shadowy pointer to the good life.

Habermas's oeuvre is truly formidable. But behind this eclecticism is a surprisingly consistent, almost obsessive interest in a single unifying theme: that of `intersubjectivity.' Whether Habermas is discussing the performative contradictions of French poststructuralists, or the aesthetic theories of Walter Benjamin or Theodor Adorno, or the weaknesses of the student movement in Germany, or the liberal public sphere, he is bound to refer to `undistorted communication' or an `ideal speech situation' or some variant of these. Briefly, Habermas "finds confirmed in his dealings with language and in his analysis of universal pragmatics... the primacy of actions oriented towards reaching an understanding, as opposed to controlling or manipulating objects or other agents in the world" (Holub 15). This orientation towards understanding and agreement is the peg on which Habermas hangs his own emancipatory project: and a pretty weak peg it has seemed to many critics.\(^1^2\)

In his own "Idea of the University: Learning Processes,"
Habermas sets out the history of the German idealist's idea of the university. With the increase in `functional specificities,' a certain `bundling of functions' became the characteristic feature of the German university, the bringing together of disparate aims and methodologies under one roof; this bundling depends on an explicit `corporative consciousness' or academic self-understanding:

The corporative self-understanding of the university would be in trouble if it were anchored in something like a normative ideal, for ideas come and go... the old idea of the university... was grounded... in the permanently differentiated scientific process itself. But if science can no longer be used to anchor ideas in this way, because the multiplicity of the disciplines no longer leaves room for the totalizing power of either an all-encompassing philosophical fundamental science or even a reflective form of material critique of science and scholarship that would emerge from the disciplines themselves, on what could an integrative self-understanding of the corporative body of the university be based? ("The Idea of the University" 123)

Knowing Habermas, the answer is fairly predictable: Schleiermacher has already provided the answer: `The first law of all efforts directed toward knowledge [is] communication'.... I seriously believe that in the last analysis it is the communicative forms of scientific
and scholarly argumentation that hold university learning processes in their various functions together. ("The Idea of the University" 123-24)

It is typical of Habermas that he will go on in a wilfully prosaic fashion about `bundling' when talking about the university constructed around the ideas of men like Schiller, Humboldt and Schleiermacher. No poetic flights of fancy about bildung here; bundling and sober intersubjectivity reign unmolested.

Habermas's early Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere displays his thought at its closest point to liberal democracy (John Durham Peters describes his work on the public sphere as `Habermas's return gift to liberal thought'). What he says about the public sphere applies, inevitably, to the university, which can be understood as a microcosmic public sphere; to some, indeed, the only real public sphere left:

The public sphere is a realm in which individuals gather to participate in open discussions. Potentially everyone has access to it; no one enters into discourse in the public sphere with an advantage over another.... The literary public sphere, which Habermas considers a prefiguration of a political public sphere oriented towards matters of state policy, deals with issues of cultural, rather than governmental concern. (Holub 3)

Together with an account of the bourgeois public sphere, the
demise of which Habermas describes with obvious regret, there is an analysis of the philosophical underpinnings of the public sphere, especially in the writings of Immanuel Kant. Habermas quite readily admits that his account of the public sphere is somewhat idealized; like most of his concepts, it serves a normative rather than a descriptive function.

At the heart of Habermas's description of this public sphere is the image of adult, private citizens, sitting together, their privileges and statuses temporarily 'bracketed' while they discuss, fearlessly, their shared political lives. Interestingly, Habermas sees even parliamentary discussion as a degenerate later form of this pristine, informal public sphere centered around coffee houses, newspapers and salons; that may explain why his theories do not fit too easily into discussions of the 'parliamentary' university. Habermas, like Rousseau, favours face-to-face, direct democracy over representation. Habermas's distrust of representation comes out clearly in his description of contemporary 'administered' discussions, and, incidentally throws some light on what he would make of Graff's 'teaching the conflict':

Today the conversation itself is administered. Professional dialogues from the podium, panel discussions, and round table shows--the rational debate of private people becomes one of the production numbers of the stars in radio and television, a salable package ready for the box office; it assumes commodity form
even at "conferences" where everyone can "participate." Discussion, now a "business," becomes formalized; the presentation of positions and counterpositions is bound to certain prearranged rules of the game; consensus about the subject matter is made largely superfluous by that concerning form. (164)

Since Habermas has located his public sphere at a particular time and in particular locations rather than in an avowed Utopia, his theory has inevitably come under attack, especially by feminists, for historical and sociological inaccuracy. Carole Pateman has pointed out that social contract theories, from Rousseau to Rawls, exclude the participation of women, not incidentally but constitutively. The private, the realm of the family, the domestic economy, has notoriously been ignored by male political theorists, and Habermas is no exception to the rule. Feminist scholarship in general has tended to emphasize the fact that the necessary structural counterpart of the public, which is of course "the private," is undertheorised in Habermas's account. Nancy Fraser, in "What's Critical About Critical Theory?" points out (apropos Habermas's general theory of communicative action) that the 'gender subtext' that Habermas ignores, when drawn into view, undermines all his carefully elaborated distinctions:

Once the gender-blindness of Habermas's model is overcome, however, all these connections come into view. It then becomes clear that gender norms run like
pink and blue threads through paid work, state administration, and citizenship as well as through familial and sexual relations...a gender sensitive reading...reveals that male dominance is intrinsic rather than accidental to classical capitalism, since the institutional structure of this social formation is actualized by means of gendered roles. It follows that the forms of male dominance at issue here are not properly understood as lingering forms of premodern status inequality. They are, rather, intrinsically modern in Habermas's sense, since they are premised on the separation of waged labor and the state from female childrearing and the household. (263)

In one of the best critiques of Habermas's theory of the public sphere ("Rethinking the Public Sphere"), Fraser, while she makes it clear that "the idea of the public sphere' in Habermas's sense is a conceptual resource," not necessarily to be regarded as empirically accurate in all respects, nevertheless argues forcefully that he idealizes the public sphere. The work of revisionist historiographers like Joan Landes, Mary Ryan and Geoff Eley, she argues, reveals that "despite the rhetoric of publicity and accessibility, the official public sphere rested on, indeed was importantly constituted by, a number of significant exclusions" ("Rethinking the Public Sphere" 113). Chief among these, of course, were exclusions around the axis of gender. Habermas also fails to register the ironic fact that "a
discourse of publicity touting accessibility, rationality, and the suspension of status hierarchies is itself deployed as a strategy of distinction," used to shore up the newly emerging identities of an elite group ("Rethinking the Public Sphere" 115). Habermas's isolation of the middle class public sphere from its context in order to deploy it in our own time results in his failing "to examine other, nonliberal, nonbourgeois, competing public spheres" including those composed largely of women, which "creatively used the heretofore quintessentially 'private' idioms of domesticity and motherhood precisely as springboards for public activity" ("Rethinking the Public Sphere" 115). Fraser argues, on the whole convincingly, that we can no longer assume "that the bourgeois conception of the public sphere was simply an unrealized Utopian ideal; it was also a masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate an emergent form of class rule" (116).

Habermas's early work on the public sphere touches on many of the themes that he developed in later, more theoretical work. Philosophically, Habermas's elaboration of communicative rationality has been attacked on the grounds that it is both naive and excessively abstract. It does not seem to be a part of most people's understanding of speech, for instance, that it is necessarily oriented to the telos of agreement. Lies, contradictions, paradoxes, abuse, silences, and aporias seem to be as integral to speech as consensus (as Jean Francois Lyotard, among others, has argued). And to make this hypothetical "will
to agreement' serve as a peg on which to hang his Enlightenment morality is, not to put too fine a point on it, extraordinarily risky. His theorising of the public sphere suffers from the same mixture of extreme abstraction and surprising naivete: the categorial exclusions of persons from the bourgeois public sphere, the contradictory historical evidence about it; the fact that the family looms hugely in his theory as the significant absence that structures his analysis of public men in public places; the distrust of representation in a complex, hugely populated modern world; all these contribute to the strangely unsatisfying, unreal texture of these theoretically sophisticated writings. That these writings are the work of a man completely at home in the parliamentary university, indeed one whose universe appears to be bounded by the horizon of academic speculation and discussion, should warn us against accepting the arguments for such a university too easily.

Alasdair MacIntyre, like Habermas and Michel Foucault, is undoubtedly one of the philosophes of our age. Like theirs, his range is truly formidable. Like Habermas, he has written extensively on consensus and verbal negotiations, though from an almost diametrically opposed position. From 1981, when his After Virtue was published, MacIntyre has been obsessively attacking the unending debate, the disagreement, doubt, uncertainty and inconclusiveness that characterise modern liberal societies. Both Habermas and MacIntyre long for consensus, but Habermas achieves serenity in a Kantian understanding of the perhaps-never-to-be-
achieved but nevertheless always potential telos of agreement built into language; MacIntyre, more historical as well as more religious, despairs of achieving consensus because liberalism has destroyed the possibility of consensus by eroding classical dogma and Christian teaching, and by elevating neutrality and procedural justice into norms.

MacIntyre has positioned himself, pedagogically and theologically, as Newman's heir, in the words of Malcolm Cowling (39). His hostility to liberalism, like Newman's, is fundamental and unremitting. (Newman, however, was not horrified by the endless disputations characteristic of university life; in fact, he rather seemed to enjoy them, and earned a reputation as one of the keenest polemicists of his time). Like Newman again, MacIntyre has also written provocatively on the university. In Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, he returns to the attack on the destructive effects of tolerating incommensurable discourses. He manages to sound both despairing about inevitable consensus and, like any liberal conflict theorist (Graff, for instance), hopeful of a better outcome. He feels that "one of the most striking facts about modern political orders in that they lack institutionalized forums within which these fundamental disagreements can be systematically explored and charted, let alone there being any attempt made to resolve them" (Whose Justice? 2). But he is sharply critical of the usual academic forms of conflict:

Modern academic philosophy turns out by and large to
provide means for a more accurate and informed definition of disagreement rather than for progress toward its resolution. Professors of philosophy who concern themselves with questions of justice and of practical rationality turn out to disagree with each other as sharply, as variously, and, so it seems, as irremediably upon how such questions are to be answered as anyone else. (Whose Justice? 3)

Like Graff, MacIntyre emphasizes the pernicious effect of an inadequate pedagogy on the student; but while Graff argues that the student is demoralised and rendered apathetic by exclusion from the intellectual disputes that exercise his or her teachers, MacIntyre argues that the inconclusiveness of even the debates attended to can, indeed must, demoralise the student:

What the student is in consequence generally confronted with, and this has little to do with the particular intentions of his or her particular teachers, is an apparent inconclusiveness which seems to abandon him or her to his or her prerational preferences. So the student characteristically emerges from a liberal education with a set of skills, a set of preferences, and little else, someone whose education has been as much a process of deprivation as of enrichment. (Whose Justice? 400)

There is, of course, a deep contradiction in MacIntyre's thought." This incoherence emerges quite clearly in
"Reconceiving the University as an Institution and the Lecture as a Genre," the last chapter of MacIntyre's Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry. What are his remedies for the ills of "a university which had deprived itself of substantive moral enquiry"?

The contemporary university can perhaps only defend that in itself which makes it genuinely a university by admitting these conflicts to a central place both in its enquiries and in its teaching curriculum. What kind of change would this involve?... What then is possible? The answer is: the university as a place of constrained disagreement, of imposed participation in conflict, in which a central responsibility of higher education would be to initiate students into conflict.

(Three Rival Versions 230-31)

After the immense erudition that has passed before us, an erudition that encompasses Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Nietzsche, Foucault, Bachelard, Kuhn, the writers of the Ninth Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica; an erudition, moreover, marshalled with the intention of showing up the flabbiness of liberal disputation, this sounds decidedly weak, not to say desperate, a pathetic diminuendo after the crashing chords of the opening sections. The hostile critic of liberal free speech concludes, like Mill, that conflict is the best guarantee of truth. As Cowling points out, MacIntyre has not taken into account "the extent to which his tactical demand for conflict
involves a substantive acceptance of [liberalism's] inconclusiveness" (42).

Of the three theorists whose work I have been discussing, two have offered defences of the university as a space for useful dispute, or unconstrained debate leading to negotiated agreements, and the third has argued that the very disputatiousness of liberalism undermines all possibility of a shared, and valuable, existence. Paradoxically, while, on the one hand, Habermas's and Graff's theories, as I argued earlier, may not command widespread acceptance despite their reasonableness; on the other, MacIntyre's attack on the unending disputes characteristic of liberalism is undermined by his own admission of the necessity of procedural guarantees, at least in the case of the university. What this may point to is not so much the weakness of the theories discussed as a general and gradual diminution of faith in liberalism as a political and social theory; and with this, a loss of interest in defences of free speech.

A note on my own shifting allegiances and priorities may be in order at this point. When I embarked on this thesis four years ago, the parliamentary university was the true university, the university I wanted to defend. It was, to me, a bulwark against dangerous relativisms, attacks on excellence, multiplying discourses of selfhood, the deconstruction of identities. It is, I hope, a mark of growth, and not only of growing cynicism, that four years down the line I can pack my earlier enthusiasm into a
first chapter that blandly interrogates the value of discussion. Not too blandly, though, I hope. I continue to value the pleasures and benefits of conversation and discussion; but I am convinced they should remain pleasures, not be elevated into imperatives. As I argued earlier, if enough people withhold assent from the norms of rational debate, they cease to be norms. The consensual imperative can sometimes be coercive, as feminists have good reason to know. Here, I feel, Stuart Hampshire and Michael Oakeshott are better guides than Habermas and Graff. Discussion is important because it is conducive to justice as fairness, not primarily because polemical exchanges sharpen your intellect or because speech itself is obscurely the model of the good life; and conversation is important because of its intrinsic playfulness and civility. If the `conversational university' sounds too playful, too lacking in professional rigour, that may be the fault of the professionalism, not the conversation.

Liberalism, Liberal Education, Literary Liberalism

I have been discussing certain theoretical efforts to justify the functioning of the modern university in terms of rational modes of communication. As I pointed out, these justifications are very similar to, if not derived from, liberal notions about the freedom of speech. In the background is the much larger question: what is the relationship of liberalism as a whole to the university?

John Dunn believes that liberalism, being "a much less
neatly bounded topic than democratic theory" is "a much harder topic to discuss" (Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future, 28). What would he make, one wonders, of the unboundedness of a topic like `liberal education' where even disagreement is not possible, starting points being so far apart? Liberalism, as a political theory, can at least be discussed in terms of three or four characteristic features which together constitute the field, in addition, of course, to the obligatory reference to liberty. John Gray's list of features common to different types of liberalism may not command complete acceptance, but I think most liberals will grant that it covers much of the territory:

Common to all variants of the liberal tradition is a **definite** conception, distinctively modern in character, of man and society.... It is **individualist**, in that it asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity; **egalitarian**, inasmuch as it confers on all men the same moral status and denies the relevance to legal and political order of differences in moral worth among human beings; **universalist**, affirming the moral unity of the human species and according a secondary importance to specific historic associations and cultural forms; and **meliorist** in its affirmation of the corrigibility and **improvability** of all social institutions and political arrangements. (Liberalism x)
Dunn associates liberalism with tolerance, suspicion towards tradition, and an antipathy towards authority; Immanuel Wallerstein, in a savage indictment of liberalism, calls it *centrism incarnate*; Judith Shklar emphasizes the importance of tolerance, pointing to the origins of liberalism as a compromise between "the demands of creedal orthodoxy and those of charity"; for John Rawls an important aspect of liberalism is that liberals should have the greatest freedom consistent with a like freedom for all.\(^{20}\) The list could be added to *indefinitely*, without any radical innovations becoming apparent. Freedom, equality, tolerance, reformism, representative democracy, the importance of the market: these are the basic terms of reference.

If defenders of liberalism tend to emphasize such features as equality and reformism, critics tend to point to liberalism's dependence on a utilitarian ethic or the workings of the market. If John Stuart Mill is the paradigmatic liberal, whose most celebrated work defends the autonomy of the individual against all encroachments, Jeremy Bentham and Adam Smith always loom in the background, reminding us that liberalism has always been associated with the felicific calculus and the invisible hand as well.

One might be forgiven for assuming that the term *'liberal education'* had something to do with liberalism. After all, *'liberal humanism'* seems to be linked to liberalism, and isn't liberal education the instruction received by liberal humanists? A quick look at some arbitrarily chosen definitions will put paid
to this idea:

That man, I think, has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind. (T.H. Huxley, "A Liberal Education" 1486)

That liberal education should be centred in the study of creative literature is a proposition that will perhaps meet with general agreement. When I insist that for English-speaking people it must be centred in the literature of the English language I have in mind in the first place the distinctive discipline of intelligence that literary study should be. (F.R. Leavis, *English Literature in the University* 166-67)

True liberal education requires that the student's whole life be radically changed by it, that what he learns may affect his action, his tastes, his choices, that no previous attachment be immune to examination and hence re-evaluation. Liberal education puts
everything at risk and requires students who are able to risk everything. (Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind 370)

Liberal education saw itself as being about the formation of character, the learning of values--moral, ethical, aesthetic--`the inner being' as much as the outer. (Alison Light, "Two Cheers for Liberal Education" 33)

[We should be] enhancing and ennobling the meaning and purpose of liberal arts education by giving it a truly central place in the social life of a nation where it can become a public forum for addressing preferentially the needs of the poor, the dispossessed, and the disenfranchised. (Henry Giroux, "Liberal Arts Education" 128)

I have not chosen these definitions to demonstrate their range or contradictory character; they are the first that came to hand. The first (and perhaps the last) thing one notices about these and other definitions of a `liberal education' is their vagueness. Even the seemingly anomalous specificity of Leavis's and Giroux's statements is deceptive: they are not definitions, but exhortations.

One eminent Victorian, however, defined a liberal education
with exemplary rigour:

It is common to speak of "liberal knowledge," of the "liberal arts and studies," and of a "liberal education," as the especial characteristic or property of a University and of a gentleman; what is really meant by the word? Now, first, in its grammatical sense, it is opposed to servile; and by "servile work" is understood... bodily labour, mechanical employment and the like, in which the mind has little or no part. (The Idea of a University 106)

And again,

...what is merely professional, though highly intellectual ... is not simply called liberal, and mercantile occupations are not liberal at all. Why this distinction? Because that alone is liberal knowledge which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be informed... by any end, or absorbed into any art. (108)

And:

Let me not be thought to deny the necessity, or to decry the benefit, of such attention to what is particular and practical, as belongs to the useful or mechanical arts; life could not go on without them....I only say that Knowledge, in proportion as it tends more and more to be particular, ceases to be Knowledge. (The
Idea of a University 112)

Newman could afford to describe the education offered by Oxbridge in his time without the use of euphemism; his allegiance was to a higher authority than a secular government or to anything so amorphous as 'culture.' With Arnold, however, the tendency sets in to play down the elitist, anti-industrial features of a liberal education, and, I would argue, has grown stronger over time. With Arnold, culture takes the place of religion, and a secular, elitist education becomes vital to the health and the very existence of society. The complexity of the problem facing Arnold was undeniable. In an increasingly utilitarian age it is increasingly important to offer a non-utilitarian education; but in the increasingly utilitarian age, it also becomes increasingly important to disguise the nature of this education. So the esoteric doctrine of a liberal education replaces Newman's scholastic rigour.

Defined as Newman defines it (and I have yet to come across a clearer definition), a liberal education is, paradoxically, an education for aristocrats. Such an education, with its reflexive and structural disdain for practical questions, labour, the market, industry and so on, comes into sharp conflict with liberalism's formal emphasis on equality, and, more significantly, with liberalism's tacit allegiance to the ideology of the market. Liberal education, it seems, is that which produces subjects hostile to liberalism. This is very close to Joseph Schumpeter's understanding of the function of
'intellectuals' in capitalist society. He believes that, "unlike any other type of society, capitalism inevitably and by virtue of the very logic of its civilization creates, educates and subsidizes a vested interest in social unrest" (146). Schumpeter's theory seems to corroborate the idea that liberal education inevitably exists in a contradictory, even oppositional relationship with liberal political theory. According to Schumpeter, intellectuals come into existence in order to undermine capitalism; if Newman's definition is accurate, liberal education will tend to undermine liberalism, the political system most commonly associated with capitalism.” But one may retain Schumpeter's basic structure and reject the pessimistic (to capitalists and liberals, that is) conclusion. As Mill concluded, opposition to liberalism may be precisely what liberalism needs.

In recent times, in the context of education in the humanities, the writers who have used the term 'liberal education' most confidently, are, by and large, conservatives. They tend to endorse the virtues of a 'liberal education' without specifying what it is in its essence.” On the other hand, writers who identify themselves as roughly on the Left, usually with some sympathy for poststructuralist thought and the claims of the multiculturalists, don't define the term either. This is certainly unusual, given the analytical rigour with which terms like 'ideology' or even 'liberalism' are defined. In a book with a title like The Politics of Liberal Education, for instance, with contributors such as Barbara Herrnstein Smith, Stanley Fish,
Richard Rorty, Henry Louis Gates, and Gerald Graff, one might expect to find some discussion of the concept. One would expect, indeed, that writers such as these, consciously in opposition to the orthodoxy in English studies, would unerringly home in on the elitist resonances of the traditional liberal education. There is, in fact, virtually no effort to define what is being criticised; the book is basically a collective attempt to refute neoconservative claims that higher education is being corrupted by multiculturals and poststructuralists." The confusion (or silence) regarding liberal education is probably the result of one group (the neoconservatives) using the term as a euphemism for `elite and aristocratic, ' while the other group (the cultural Left) conflates this etymologically and historically accurate meaning with another derived from the current understanding of the term `liberalism.'

The impression I get is that while many theorists wish to undermine the legitimacy of a concept such as `liberal humanism,' virtually nobody wishes to alter the status quo as far as liberal education is concerned. The desire to keep as far as possible from the ethos of the market unites conservatives, liberals and radicals. Stanley Fish, who understands this very well and delights in breaking academic taboos, explains that "the investment in being distinguishable from business is so great that academics will pay any price to protect it" (There's No Such Thing As Free Speech 275). Fish is one of the very few theorists in English studies who endorses a thoroughgoing professionalism.
He unequivocally urges English professors to Be Proud of Being a Professor. If Fish's *jovially* affirmed professionalism (the phrase is Edward Said's, from a scathing review of Fish's "Profession, Loathe Thyself") represents the embarrassingly visible face of business and industry wooing and seducing the humanities, Graff's *Teach the Conflicts* must represent the disturbingly shadowy visage of the same intruder, with the *marketplace of ideas* standing in for the crude reality of the market itself. I believe that the disapproval that Fish's and Graff's theories have elicited is linked to the perception that these theories represent a capitalist intrusion into an anti-capitalist enclave. Since I will be arguing that the humanities ought to resist the encroachments of instrumental rationality (and the market certainly endorses this rationality), and, more explicitly, that professionalism without ideals is one of the great dangers threatening the functioning of the university, I naturally have no desire to support Fish's professionalism."

About Graff's suggestions I am more ambivalent: the idea is attractive, especially to the chronically indecisive, but the recent conflicts seem to have been set up in such a way that bad-tempered intransigence or oleaginous professionalism seem to be the only options.

I have been focusing on the contradictory relationship between the humanities, as it might be construed as figuring in the phrase *a liberal education,* and liberalism. In conclusion, I would like to look at some rather more straightforward
alliances of liberalism with English studies, a \textit{literary} liberalism, as it were.

Arguably the most influential instance of assimilation and cross-fertilizing between liberalism and English studies was that of John Stuart Mill's appreciative reading of Coleridge, and the way in which this was taken up by critics like Leavis and Trilling. Even here, however, the thrust of the eventual response was conservative. Mill believed that liberalism needed conservatism to keep it strong. He famously urged liberals to pray:

\begin{quote}
Lord, enlighten thou our \textit{enemies...sharpen} their wits, give acuteness to their perceptions, and consecutiveness and clearness to their reasoning powers: we are in danger from their folly, not from their wisdom; their weakness is what fills us with apprehension, not their strength. ("Coleridge" 172)
\end{quote}

Trilling, and even more so Leavis, took Mill's approval of Coleridge as proof that they had little to learn from a utilitarian and empirical liberalism. Trilling, while arguably more sympathetic to some forms of liberalism than Leavis, can be said to have taken Mill's lesson so much to heart that he travelled, albeit very gradually, from Mill towards Coleridge all his life.\textsuperscript{27}

A more genuinely liberal approach to English studies may, however, be coming into existence. This, as might have been expected, comes out of the less \textit{historically cumbered liberal
tradition of the United States. I am referring primarily to George Kateb's reading of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman as offering "the best working out of the existential meanings of rights-based individualism, the best pursuit of its intimations" ("Democratic Individuality" 185); and the work of David Bromwich. Bromwich distances himself equally from the American neo-conservatives and the cultural radicals of the university. In many respects he is the heir of Trilling, especially in his willingness to learn from conservative thinkers like Edmund Burke and Michael Oakeshott. Kateb and Bromwich (and perhaps Martha Nussbaum) can be seen as liberals who are filling out the contours of liberalism with affective content derived from literature rather than from abstract rights theories. It is too early to predict whether this is a trend that will become popular, but it seems likely that there will be more such interventions, bringing a welcome new voice to a debate dominated by conservative orthodoxy and radical nihilism.
NOTES


3. John Gray, in "The Moral Foundations of Market Institutions" (Beyond the New Right) makes the argument that market institutions work well only where their practitioners accord them moral legitimacy. This would explain why markets often fail when they are introduced into societies and defended only on pragmatic or utilitarian grounds. Gray's moral defence of markets is fairly complex, and has to do with the autonomy guaranteed by the functioning of markets, rather than with prosperity, say, or with information about goods.

4. In "Preaching to the Converted" (English Inside and Out, 109-121), he writes: "Yet the academy is in a certain sense a branch of show business... The reluctance to acknowledge that what we do has a show business dimension only makes it more likely that we will be bad show business" (111); and "...we see how limited we are as long as we resist recognizing that the academy is a form of popular culture, a stance that prevents us from learning something from the media about the organization of representations"(120).

5. See especially English Inside and Out which has Fish's "The Unbearable Ugliness of Volvos" and Graff's "Preaching to the Converted." Fish is quite gratifyingly frank about the benefits of "the lecture and conference circuit." In the dazzlingly vulgar exercise in group self congratulation called "The Unbearable Ugliness of Volvos" he dilates on "the new sources of extra income, increased opportunities for domestic and foreign travel, easy access to national and international centers of research...attention, applause, fame" [274] and urges his fellow radicals to rid themselves of counterproductive and unhealthy feelings of guilt.

6. See Bromwich, Politics By Other Means, 188.

7. John Searle has commented on the strangeness of 'culture wars' being conducted by "...on the one side, for the most part, journalists and politicians; on the other, resentful radicals" ("Is There a Crisis in American Higher Education?" 693).

8. The whole question of the relationship between sociology and English studies is much too vast to go into here; but certainly the two disciplines have been competing with, as well as learning from, each other. Recent developments in English studies seem to indicate that sociology has gained a definite advantage, in that a whole generation of avant-garde theorists in English seem to want to
write like sociologists. By this I do not mean that much recent theoretical work in English approximates in quality to work done by, say, Anthony Giddens or Pierre Bourdieu; it is more a matter of sounding scientific, and even positivist. For a very good discussion of the historical rivalry and trade-offs between sociology and English studies, see Wolf Lepenies's *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology.*

9. See George E. Marcus's "A Broad(er)side to the Canon" for a fascinating analysis of the 'canon wars' in English. Marcus argues that the inordinate amounts of passion and invective characteristic of the battles about the canon are a function of nostalgia for the political climate of an earlier period, and of a sense of its loss: ...academics, in seeking attachment to real-world events and politics, suffer from the crisis of representation that affects them professionally. Their desire for political commitment lacks conceptual frameworks that they can take for granted....From the late 1960s, this liberally inclined orientation to real-world politics started to be undone, and there has been a vicarious, hermetic re-creation of traditional categories within the politics of the academy.... Debate about the canon reproduces the fiction of the old categories, and has great nostalgic appeal. (106-7)

Interestingly, Marcus cites David Lodge's satirical campus novel *Small World* in his essay. Lodge's (academic) hero concludes cynically, at the end of the novel, that 'theory' in English studies exists for its own sake, and has nothing to do with anything external to it.

10. Habermas is clearly out of sympathy with Mill's distrust of the 'masses.' In a section on Mill and Tocqueville in *Structural Transformation*, he writes:

> The liberalist interpretation of the bourgeois constitutional state was reactionary: it reacted to the power of the idea of a critically debating public's self-determination, initially included in its institutions, as soon as this public was subverted by the propertyless and uneducated masses. (136)

Concerning Habermas's closeness to the Protestant austerity of Luther and Kant, John Durham Peters remarks:

> For Kant, with whom Habermas's ultimate loyalty clearly lies, publicity is the political counterpart of morality or the *categorical imperative.* Those acts are just, says Kant, that an actor could wish were a universal law for all people and seasons. Similarly, publicity is based on universalizability: every citizen, regardless of personal status, may participate in public debate and discussion. ("Habermas on the Public Sphere" 549)

And, again:

> Beyond all symbolic politics, for Habermas, lurks the king's body, which must not be resurrected. This is a
prime example of Protestant iconoclasm: the place of power must remain empty; attempts to render the divine symbolically present risk reification and violence. In its place there can be nothing but the word—the critical rational debate of the citizenry, guaranteed by just procedures. (565)

And Terry Eagleton, in *Ideology of the Aesthetic* points out that it is possible to see in Habermas's ideal speech community an updated version of Kant's community of aesthetic judgement. Just as Habermas holds that communication is naturally oriented to agreement, so Kant proposes some deep spontaneous consensus built into our faculties, which the act of aesthetic taste most clearly exemplifies. (405)


12. Perry Anderson's discussion of Habermas's theories in *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, though quite brief, is excellent. Both he and Terry Eagleton (The *Ideology of the Aesthetic*) are very critical of Habermas's 'angelism' of language (Anderson's phrase, *In the Tracks* 64). John Gray, in *Post-liberalism*, puts the case against Habermas's communicative rationality succinctly:

The idea of full communicative rationality in an ideal speech situation among people is an opaque one in Habermas's thought. Whatever it means, it is associated with the Enlightenment expectation that in an undistorted dialogue human beings will come to convergence in their values, projects and perspectives. At no point in his prolix and voluminous theorizings does Habermas give this expectation any foundation in reason. It hovers in mid-air, foundationless, like the Cheshire Cat's smile, its supportive body detached and destroyed by the very modernism Habermas is so anxious to defend....In reposing his faith in open dialogue, he has the character of a sort of bien-pensant Pascal, laying a wager on reason which nothing in our (or his) experience warrants. (93)

13. In "Distrust of representation: Habermas on the Public Sphere" (551). Peters's discussion is one of the clearest I have read on Habermas's reconstruction of the public sphere.


15. Seyla Benhabib, one of Habermas's most sympathetic interlocutors, also makes the point that it is a mistake to demand descriptive accuracy of what, after all, was intended to be a normative theory. In the chapter "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Jurgen Habermas" (Situating the
She writes:

Certainly, a normative theory, and in particular a critical social theory, cannot take the aspirations of any social actors at face value and fit its critical criteria to meet the demands of a particular social movement. Commitment to social transformation, and yet a certain critical distance, even from the demands of those with whom one identifies, are essential to the vocation of the theorist as social critic. (Situating The Self 109-110)

16. In addition to the critics already mentioned (John Durham Peters, Nancy Fraser, Perry Anderson, Terry Eagleton and John Gray), there are similar criticisms made by Martin Jay in "Habermas and Modernism" and Richard Rorty in "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity" (both in Reading Habermas; 125-139 and 161-175 respectively); and by J.G. Merquior, in Western Marxism 163-185.

17. In The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard writes:

...to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics. This does not necessarily mean that one plays in order to win. A move can be made for the sheer pleasure of its invention: what else is involved in that labor of language harassment undertaken by popular speech and by literature? Great joy is had in the endless invention of turns of phrase, of words and meanings, the process behind the evolution of language on the level of parole. (10)

This is about as far from Habermas' view of language as one can get. Indeed, Lyotard seems to get great pleasure from inverting Habermas' theories and arguing that fabrication and invention are more central to speech acts than truth-telling.

18. Benjamin Barber's discussion of MacIntyre's thinking in The Conquest of Politics brings out this contradiction well. Of MacIntyre's criticism of liberalism he says:

The lesson with which MacIntyre leaves us is in fact deeply conservative, a lugubrious rejection of all that is modern but with no possibility of retrieving the virtues of a past irrevocably lost.... Liberalism as the legitimating philosophy of an age of emancipation may well have run its course.... But a revolt against liberalism that appeals only to a dead and irrecoverable past has little hope of filling the hollowness that characterizes the postmodern era. Living, as we do, not only after virtue but also after liberty, we require a philosophy of the political that realizes and reconciles both rather than a philosophy of nostalgia that aspires to restore the first at the expense of the second. (190-91).

And Stephen Holmes, in The Anatomy of Ant i Liberal ism.
describes MacIntyre's constant oscillations between positions as 'a form of philosophical incoherence':
At the same time that he yearns sincerely for moral harmony, MacIntyre enfolds, within his own intellect, the essential disharmonies of Western civilization and finds himself riven helplessly by incompatible traditions. The culture of the West, he explains, was marked for almost two millennia by a sharp tension between pagan and religious ideals, by the conflict, for example, between the glory ethic and the biblical ethic. The observation is not impersonal. For MacIntyre turns his own mind into a battlefield where this war can be ceaselessly waged. He professes undying loyalty both to local custom and eternal truth, both to pagan excellence and to redemption from sin, both to ethnic chauvinism and to the Christian idea of a universal mission. His Janus face is the ultimate secret of his thought. These stubborn duplicities can make his work absorbing, of course. But they are also a form of philosophical incoherence. (120)

19. I discuss Michael Oakeshott's views on conversation in the next chapter.

20. Dunn's comments are from Western Political Theory (29), already mentioned; Wallerstein's from "The Agonies of Liberalism: What Hope Progress?" (6); Shklar's from "The Liberalism of Fear" in Liberalism and the Moral Life; Rawls's from A Theory of Justice.

21. In the essay "Literature and Science" Arnold begins with a description of Plato's ideas about an ideal education. He writes: "[Plato's] scorn of trade and handicraft is fantastic ... he had no conception of a great industrial community such as that of the United States" (1468). Though Arnold's goal, like Newman's, is to defend a liberal education, it is almost impossible for him to say so. It is significant that the greatest apostle of 'liberal education' scarcely ever uses the phrase.

22. An example of this esotericism (or perhaps sheer evasiveness) is Arnold's lecture "Literature and Science," which, with T.H. Huxley's response, is seen as the precursor of the altogether more vicious exchange between C.P. Snow and F.R. Leavis. As mentioned, Arnold begins his lecture with a discussion of Plato's disdain for manual and useful labour; but he is so reluctant to endorse Plato's liberal education openly that he seems to play into his enemies' hands (his enemies here being those who wanted a literary and classical education replaced by a predominantly 'useful,' scientific or technical education).

23. Schumpeter's idea of an antagonistic relationship between capitalism and its intellectuals has been taken up, in interesting ways, by Daniel Bell and Peter Berger. Bell, in The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism has made the influential argument that
capitalism has for some time now been in the process of being disaggregated, with the components of an ascetic, Protestant work ethic and of a hedonist, gratification-oriented philosophy working against each other. Berger's theory, both simpler and of earlier provenance, positions humanities intellectuals as resentful of loss of power in a science dominated world. Fredric Jameson, the American Marxist cultural theorist, argues against Bell that capitalism has actually extended and consolidated its hegemony via modernist art forms and advertising techniques (see his "Postmodernism and Consumer Society"). My argument, that liberalism benefits from the opposition of liberal education to it, in some ways parallels Jameson's, though he is talking about capitalism rather than liberalism, and he writes, more or less, as one who is hostile to both.

24. I have already quoted Allan Bloom, whose Closing of the American Mind with its apocalyptic warnings of scholarly degeneration has been widely read and discussed. Those writing self-consciously as Bloom's cultural heirs are not obviously more perspicuous in the matter of defining a liberal education. Thus Roger Kimball, in Tenured Radicals, writes: And, indeed, that a liberal arts education sought the best was one reason college was once referred to as "higher" education: it was higher in the sense not only of providing more education but also in the sense of providing a more profound acquaintance with the formative ideas and values of our culture. Intellectually, its aim was truth; morally, its aim was virtue. (39)

Dinesh D'Souza, in Illiberal Education, comes much closer to an accurate analysis, but sheers off as he approaches the edge: ...liberal education is education for rulers. In ancient times princes, aristocrats, and gentry sought liberal education [which prepared] them for the responsibilities of government. We do not share this elitist conception of liberal education, but this does not imply that we should change the definition. In a democratic society, every citizen is a ruler, who joins in exercising the duties of government. (250)

And so on and so forth. D'Souza does not seem to be aware that is quite anomalous to admit a conception's elitist origins and then claim that conception exclusively for democracy without jettisoning the original definition.

25. The exception is Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich, who writes: But the dominant tradition in the United States has for too long excluded too many, while hiding that exclusiveness behind partial universals. The "liberal arts" be it remembered, were defined in contradistinction to the "servile arts," the skills of those who were not allowed into the "highest education," the "education worthy of a free man." The "liberal arts" were indeed considered liberating, but not in the sense we use the
term today. They were the arts to be cultivated by those men who did not need to work, who were "liberated" from the necessities of labor—productive, reproductive, and nurturant. ("From Ivory Tower to Tower of Babel?" 197)

26. I discuss Fish's endorsement of professionalism and Said's response to it in more detail in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

27. For interesting discussions of Trilling's ambivalence towards liberalism, see Stephen L. Tanner's Lionel Trilling and William M. Chace's Lionel Trilling: Criticism and Politics.