

purview.) The ombudsman reports to the Swedish Press Council, which includes journalists and publishers but is dominated by representatives of the public. If the council rules against a publication, as it did 46 times last year, almost always on the recommendation of ombudsman Per-Arne Jigenius, the offending newspaper or magazine must publish the council's decision and is fined about \$3,000.

More often, Jigenius is able, drawing on his 20 years of experience as a newspaper editor, to arrange a settlement, with the publication providing an appropriate correction and apology. He manages to resolve about 70 cases a year in this fashion. The ombudsman handles only complaints alleging harm to an individual from publicity (rather than beefs about ideological bias and the like), and he dismisses the overwhelming majority of the complaints he receives.

Only two or three complaints out of the 436 cases Jigenius handled in 1996 ultimate-

ly went to court. But that may be in part because libel laws are very weak in Sweden.

"Whatever its limitations," Price says, "it is clear that in a significant number of cases the [ombudsman] system gives injured members of the public what they want most—a prompt and inexpensive correction, while helping the media avoid what they most fear—a long and expensive lawsuit."

But the system may not work well elsewhere, Price says. It is "a product of a combination of factors that may be unique: a population that is accustomed to regulation and confident in bureaucracy as a solution to social ills; an industry that is prepared to cooperate—with remarkable unanimity—for mutual advantage; a government that may very well legislate if the media become overly irresponsible; and a culture that prizes rationality and consensus, and loathes confrontation and mudslinging." That hardly sounds like the rambunctious United States of America.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Morality and the Modern University

A Survey of Recent Articles

The University of Chicago and other elite colleges and universities are "fundamentally amoral" institutions. Aside from issuing formal condemnations of cheating, plagiarism, and academic fraud, they make almost no effort to give their students any moral guidance. Once it was different, of course. But the founding religious purpose of the University of Chicago and many other institutions was lost, and the effort by social scientists to develop an independent "scientific" morality proved a failure. "Today, elite universities operate on the belief that there is a clear separation between intellectual and moral purpose, and they pursue the former while largely ignoring the latter."

What sounds like a serious indictment of the University of Chicago in particular and of academe in general is, in fact, drawn from an unusually candid address on "The Aims of Education" that was given last year to Chicago's incoming freshmen by John J. Mearsheimer, a professor of political science at the university. *Philosophy and Literature* (Apr. 1998) reprinted the speech to kick off a

symposium including seven other scholars. The issue: whether institutions of higher learning are, or should be, in Mearsheimer's words, "largely mum on ethical issues."

Universities, in his view, have instead three aims: to teach undergraduates "to think critically . . . to broaden [their] intellectual horizons [and] to promote self-awareness." A University of Chicago education also serves as "a meal ticket," he observed. Though costing more than \$120,000 over four years, it enables those who possess it "to make lots of money" and "achieve an upper-class lifestyle." Not that moral questions are unimportant, or that students should pay them little mind, Mearsheimer said, but "for better or worse," his university and other such institutions offer little help in finding answers. Few classes at Chicago, he said, even "discuss ethics or morality in any detail."

Wayne C. Booth, an emeritus professor of English at the University of Chicago, says that Mearsheimer doesn't seem to know what is going on at their university. "Teaching about morality and how to think about moral

issues goes on almost everywhere here—most obviously, of course, in the humanities, but also in the sciences.” How, he asks, could anyone teach “Aristotle’s *Ethics*, the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the novels of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Jane Austen and Melville, the works of Plato, Kant, and William James—to choose just a few from this year’s rich offerings—without engaging students in genuine inquiry about what is moral or ethical behavior, and on what kind of persons they should try to become?”

In response, Mearsheimer concedes that students have the opportunity to discuss moral issues in detail in a “few” classes at Chicago, though even in them the teachers properly leave the students “to figure out their own answers.”

To John D. Lyons, a professor of French at the University of Virginia and former editor of *Academe*, however, the university

Mearsheimer describes “strikes me as a wonderful place, though very atypical of American higher education. . . . It looks to me as if the university, and particularly the faculty, is today more involved, collectively, in providing moral guidance to students than at any time in the last century.” Their guidance takes the form of speech codes, rules of sexual conduct, and other attempts to enforce political correctness.

That elite institutions of higher education have strayed so far from the traditional ideal of a liberal education as Mearsheimer’s description suggests “stunned” Patrick Henry, a professor of French at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, and coeditor of *Philosophy and Literature*. “Mearsheimer’s educational project is strong on critical thinking and promoting self-awareness but, despite the talk of broadening one’s horizons, it looks rather self-enclosed,

The Nothingness of Evil

In *Theology Today* (Apr. 1998), Jean Bethke Elshtain, a professor of social and political ethics at the University of Chicago, ponders the relevance today of Saint Augustine’s reflections on evil.

Augustine’s grappling with sin and the relation of sin to evil is the story of his struggle with Manicheanism. Repudiating the view that evil is an active, polluting force before which good is essentially passive, Augustine insists that evil is something each person has to contend with because no external force, no devil makes one “do it.” Augustine comes to the conclusion that evil is nothing: It is the removal of good; it is a kind of wasteland of the human spirit. . . . He rejects the notion that God created evil as a full-fledged malignant principle. The human person, from free will, commits a sin and partakes of that dearth we name evil. . . .

For Augustine, evil cannot generate. It can only reproduce itself through acts of debased mimesis. Only goodness has power and plenitude and generative force. Evil is a kind of noncreation, a draining away from that which is. “The loss of good has been given the name of ‘evil,’” Augustine writes in Book XI of The City of God. If evil were generative, one would have to hold that evil is embodied, that matter is the work of an evil demiurge, and that evil has creative power. This, I believe, is a direction our culture now tends. Much popular entertainment is awash in Gothic horror, with hauntings, slashings, and supernatural appearances of all kinds. We grant more power to evil than to good. It is difficult to get out of this essentially dualistic way of thinking, a habit of mind that, in our time, gives the edge (so to speak) to evil over good. Perhaps that is because it is much easier to blame either one’s own nature or some external force for evil than to see oneself caught in a world in which enmity comports with self-pride and is, deep down, hatred of our own finitude, which, in turn, means animosity toward our Creator. Augustine’s reflections on evil, in his own time and for ours, constitute a brave and brilliant attempt to strip evil of generative power.



contains no social conscience, and lacks an ethical dimension. Its so-called benefits are elitist, monetary, and egocentric.” Henry favors “forcing students to do *critical moral thinking* and to come to terms with the concept of moral excellence and with what might constitute the attainment of the good.”

The elite universities “probably have to be just what Mearsheimer says they are,” observes Eva T. H. Brann, dean emerita and a tutor at St. John’s College, in Annapolis, Maryland, a small liberal arts institution with a required “Great Books” curriculum. They are less communities than “disparate collections of atomic individuals joining in shifting patterns to accomplish various goals, among which the education of the young is not the least, but not the first

either.” Moreover, the many “assertively equal and vigorously competing disciplines” within the universities inevitably result in a multiplicity of “intellectual and ethical standards.”

The elite university will eventually disintegrate, Brann predicts, as “its own polymorphous and protean propensities drive it—aided by electronic substitutions—into increasing physical dispersion.” Meanwhile, she says, colleges and small universities can uphold the tradition of higher education. They can enforce certain standards of ethical behavior, and, at the same time, through common reading and conversation, in class and out, encourage “critical reflection about morality and virtue, about rules of action and ways of being.”

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

The End (of Cheap Oil) Is Near

A Survey of Recent Articles

With gasoline as cheap (in constant dollars) as it was when the Cadillac was still king, many Americans are happily tooling around in gas-guzzling sport-utility behemoths with all the insouciance of Alfred E. Neuman. They could be in for a big shock, if some oil industry specialists are correct.

“What, me worry?” may seem a reasonable attitude on the surface. After all, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is no longer “a force to be reckoned with,” observes Fadhil J. Chalabi, executive director of the Center for Global Energy Studies in London and former acting secretary general of OPEC (1983–88). OPEC shocked the world with two sudden and substantial price increases, in 1973 (accompanied by an embargo on shipments to the United States), and in the winter of 1978–79 during the Iranian Revolution. But this proved to be OPEC’s “last hurrah,” Chalabi writes in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1997–98), as high prices encouraged conservation, exploration, and new production, as well as the use of other fuels.

But the cheap oil (about \$15 per barrel last spring) won’t be around forever. Colin J. Campbell argues in the *National Interest* (Spring 1998), and with Jean H. Laherrère in

Scientific American (Mar. 1998), that the next oil crunch is just ahead, and it will not be temporary. “Within the next decade, the supply of conventional oil will be unable to keep up with demand,” predict Campbell and Laherrère, both with long careers in the oil industry and both now associated with Petro-consultants in Geneva.

Their conclusion, they note, contradicts the conventional wisdom in the industry, which—based on unverified estimates from companies and countries gathered by trade journals—is that there are about one trillion barrels of “proved” reserves worldwide. That suggests “that crude oil could remain plentiful and cheap for 43 more years—probably longer, because official charts show reserves growing.”

The trouble with that comforting picture, say Campbell and Laherrère, is partly that the estimate of “reserves” (i.e. the amount that companies can pump out of known oil fields before having to abandon them) is unrealistic—too high, by about 190 billion barrels. More important, not all reserves are created equal. It is not true, they point out, “that the last bucket of oil can be pumped from the ground just as quickly as the barrels