pressive speech codes in the name of "sensitivity." And when students and faculty on such campuses disrupt speakers whose views they oppose, they do so without risk of being disciplined. Only in dealing with conservatively oriented student publications do such administrations take action, and then only to suppress, rather than defend, freedom of thought and expression.

The major threat to academic freedom today is from its misuse by professors and students who engage in what can only be accurately described as academic license. When the exercise of academic freedom degenerates into academic license through a professor's, or a student's, disregard for the rational procedures essential to the search for truth, which is the work of the scholar, academic freedom is lost and the integrity of the university is compromised. The price of academic freedom, therefore, is eternal vigilance.

Bringing the Humanities Down to Earth

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The Problem

There is a frequently recurring clinical phenomenon, familiar to those who work with adolescents, which is sometimes called "Pascal's syndrome." The syndrome affects a significant fraction of adolescents who, in striving to establish themselves as fully independent, adult selves, pass through a phase in which they make utterances that amount to a radical negation of everything their parents think or believe. Adolescent rebellion may, familiarly, express itself in political, or religious, or economic, or sexual terms. In some cases, however, it is exaggerated to such a degree that it leads to what can only be described as ontological rebellion, expressing itself in utterances like "Reality does not exist," "The world is a gigantic conspiracy directed against me personally," "Only I have a clear understanding of what the world is like; all others (and especially my parents, teachers, politicians, etc.) are deluded," and so forth.

Pascal's syndrome is, fortunately, a transient affliction; it is a mercifully short-lived phase in the lives of the vast majority of affected individuals. There are, however, some (including some philosophers) who never grow out of this phase, and it may be that the credit for many of the most significant creative achievements in the history of mankind, both in science and in the arts, is to be laid at the door of these extended sufferers.

That Pascal's syndrome is normally short-lived turns first of all on the normal patterns of hormonal development; it turns also, however, on the fact

that the world outside provides a barrage of external checks–above all the need to earn a living and to garner the respect of others–which very rapidly counter the effects of radical absurdity or outrageousness in any single individual's system of beliefs. Even such group manifestations of Pascal's syndrome as the Dadaist movement, UFO cults, and like phenomena, have in general been short-lived. This is because they have not been able to protect their members from said external checks. It is one implication of the Sokal affair, however, that a new type of institutionalized Pascal's syndrome may be in the process of establishing itself among us in a way that suspends the usual natural mechanisms by which the syndrome is surmounted.

The privilege of academic freedom has depended historically upon a system of internal checking via peer review. Each individual scientist or researcher is free to say or write what he or she thinks fit, even to make utterances that to members of the wider community might seem to bear all the marks of ontological absurdity ("space and time do not exist," "Newton's Principia Mathematica is a rape manual"), provided only that these utterances are subject to the reasoned judgment of the relevant peers. The system of tenure grants the life-time privilege of a secured existence to those who succeed in demonstrating to their peers that they have a high likelihood of making a valuable contribution to the mutual process of advancement and checking of views by which the relevant disciplinary field is constituted. This system of academic freedom, tenure and peer review thus presupposes that there is some measure of the value of contributions, a measure that is calibrated primarily in terms of numbers of articles published in peer-reviewed specialist journals. In some cases this disciplinary control involves an extradisciplinary component: the process of empirical testing in the hard sciences, in medicine, in engineering involves a contact with external reality across a broad front, so that the value of the contributions of those working in these disciplines can in many cases be graded by outsiders. Not so, however, in the case of many humanities disciplines, which must rely on a completely internal system of peer review.

Self-Policed Power Corrupts Absolutely

The Sokal affair has shown us that such a system of internal review may go terribly wrong. For it suggests that there may be entire specialist disciplines all of whose members are insulated by tenure from any of the normal external checks upon the quality and reasonableness of what they do. Recall the principal lesson of the Sokal affair: the discipline of "science studies" is allowing disciplinary contributions to pass through its peer review hurdles which would be recognized by any physics undergraduate to be full to the brim with tommy-rot. Leaving aside the details of this specific case, we can draw from this affair the lesson that it is in any event at least logically possible that entire disciplines

might become in this fashion shorn from all external controls, their members habituating each successive generation of new students to ever wilder forms of tommy-rot, so that these students become themselves able to pass the disciplinary hurdles and become tenured members of the professoriate in their turn. Tommy-rot detectors may become in this fashion suspended throughout an entire discipline, yet the discipline may nonetheless be able to spread its tentacles far and wide, its ideas and methods being passed on from university to university and from generation to generation. The departments of Tommy-rot Studies in the affected universities would then be in the position of evaluating the quality of each other's work, awarding prizes and honors to each other's members. They would be further in a position to leap to each other's defense when some outsider dared to point out that something had gone terribly wrong or dared to express some concern for the poor students who were being processed through a disciplinary mill that would be insulated entirely from all relevance to any extradisciplinary reality.

The problem, clearly, is the familiar one of self-policing and of the cumulatively insidious effects of self-policed power. We can indeed anticipate that, as the degree of absurdity of utterances made by the victims of institutionalized Pascal's syndrome becomes greater and greater, more and more elaborate measures will be devised in order further to shore up the discipline from external checking and questioning. The impenetrable language of deconstructionist philosophy is just one form of such insulation against external control. Another is the cultivation of new pseudodisciplines (or "multidisciplines" or "interdisciplines") which lie entirely outside the established order and which may additionally be protected from external criticism via affiliation with some politically protected minority group.

A Solution

One means of safeguarding against the spread of institutionalized Pascal's syndrome is the extension of the system of peer review to include representatives from other disciplines. If, for example, a graduate student in a discipline like women's studies should submit a dissertation on the topic of, say, "Gender Encoding in Fluid Mechanics," then university authorities should ensure that representatives from the relevant physics and engineering disciplines are involved in the adjudication of the merits of the work, in addition to representatives from the candidate's home discipline.

A further measure is suggested by the case of English literature departments in North-American universities, where at least the seeds of institutionalized Pascal's syndrome are surely present. The large size of such departments in research universities is often sustained by the availability of funds for graduate students whose education is subsidized in recompense for their teaching of writing composition classes to incoming undergraduates. These classes

are one vital component of the activities within the affected departments that can be subjected to external checks. Imagine, for example, that some independent testing agency were called upon to implement a system whereby a small but statistically representative sample of students from each cohort takes a simple writing examination at the beginning of each course, and a comparable sample takes a similar examination at the end of the course in such a way that the two scores can be compared and the teaching competence of each graduate student thereby measured. These measures might then be used also to draw conclusions as to the competence of the corresponding faculty supervisors. The vicious cycle on which Pascal's syndrome breeds may in this manner be put out of action, as the incentives of those involved become shifted in a direction that is at least more rewarding for the undergraduates who are subjected to the courses at issue.

This use of external testing as a check on departments liable to one or another form of institutionalized Pascal's syndrome can be expanded to entire institutions. Thus, universities and colleges might be asked to contribute on a voluntary basis to a scheme to establish what might be called a "value-added index." The scheme might be based on the ACT system, which measures in crude but still significant terms what students know when they enter college as beginning undergraduates. A family of CAT examinations has already been devised that measures certain sorts of disciplinary knowledge. Let us therefore introduce what might be called a graduating ACT examination, which would be administered by an independent testing body to a small but still statistically significant sample of students graduating from each college. This graduating ACT examination would overlap considerably with the ACT examination itself; but it would include additional, tougher portions that would be designed to gauge what has been learned by students during their four-year college experience. A benchmark for the value-added index could be established by administering the two tests to a random sample of non-college-attenders in each cohort and setting the ratio of these two numbers as 100. Colleges with a value-added index greater than 100 would then have shown that they are at least adding educational value to their students; colleges (or single disciplines) with a value-added index less than 100 would, however, have shown that they are in fact making their students more stupid than they would have been had they not attended college at all.

A scheme along these lines, when once the test format had been established, would be relatively inexpensive to administer, since the test would need to be taken by only a small sample of students in each cohort. Once the system was in place, however, the proposed index would provide an invaluable tool for comparing the educational effectiveness of colleges and departments both from year to year and in relation to each other. As the results became public knowledge, and became factors in student recruitment, university administrators would become subject to incentives geared exactly to

improving the educational value of what their institutions have to offer undergraduates.

Academic Freedom and Academic Responsibility

The proposed testing system would, be it noted, have no consequences at all for the academic freedom of either faculty or students. Indeed the existence of such a system would facilitate all varieties of educational experimentation and would lend added support to the idea that radically different methods of teaching and learning and radically different types of educational content should be made available to students in different institutions, so that the relative educational effectiveness of the entire range of possibilities might at least in first approximation be established. The system would also do something to help defend academic freedom against the attacks of those who make accusations that it is being misused.

Academic freedom is a privilege to be earned by demonstrating one's competence in making valuable contributions to the mutual process of advancing and checking of views by which a scientific discipline is constituted. But academic freedom thus presupposes a measure of this value, and where internal disciplinary measures of value give signs of failing, an external measure of the sort here suggested can help fill the breach.

The De Facto Constitution of Western Education

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The answer to the question, "Does academic freedom require particular beliefs about the nature and accessibility of truth?" is an unequivocal *yes.* The absence of a belief in or, more precisely, *recognition* of truth makes any further discussion about academic freedom moot.

A reliance on objectivity was not a problem at the time when John Dewey and Arthur Lovejoy summarized the conclusions of conferences on academic freedom. As the Second World War was gathering momentum, it was still possible to assume as a sign of great progress that the entire edifice of the Western intellectual process–and its corollary educational process–had as its firm foundation the classical Western understanding of truth. Over the past millennia, a conviction had evolved that, despite the enormous sea of uncertainty governing the life of the universe and of ourselves, the human mind was able to discern a limited but highly fruitful island of certainty resting on certifiable data, the scientific method, and a large fund of sharp unbiased reasoning. It had been confirmed beyond any doubt that a runner told the Athenians the news about their victory at Marathon and that Joseph Vissarionovich Dzugashvili, a.k.a. Stalin, concluded a treaty of friendship and cooperation with previously demonized Nazi Germany. It is a scientific truth, verifiable by anyone, that the entire material universe is made up exclusively of the same kind of chemical elements as those found on earth, and that any net mechanical force acting on a mass at rest will cause it to accelerate. It has also been observed over the course of history that, given an opportunity, most human beings choose freedom over unfreedom and act to maximize health over disease. Such certainties as those about the Marathon runner and the Soviet despot, experimentally verified laws of nature, and facts about common human preferences were considered truths whose understanding is gratifying to the intellect and whose applications are favorable for the progress of human societies. Being that the discovery and dissemination of truth were at the heart of academic institutions, Dewey and Lovejoy were able to insert as cornerstones of the 1940 AAUP *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* contentions like:

> Freedom of research is fundamental to the advancement of truth.

and

> The common good depends on the free search for truth and its free exposition.

Presently, in the 1990s, however, an altered socio-political climate puts the very validity of the concept of truth and its social value under fire. While grudgingly accepting the "limited" objectivity of certain elemental observations, relativist and deconstructionist spokespersons insist that the more complex and elaborate constructs, though made of simple observable building blocks, are influenced to such an extent by the historical political lobbies of class, gender, and race that their "truth" as confirmed by the course of events and the substance of public perceptions is, in effect, determined by the power of the current most dominant social grouping. What is thus considered as true is only that particular construct which best serves the goals of the very power formulating the "truth."

In this context, one of today's more radical power movements claims that the current framework of natural sciences is built around the Newtonian law of forces because such a format was imposed by the ruling macho-gender group. A feminist edition of the natural sciences of the future would presumably have a kinder, gentler structure. Another powerful lobby was able to change the meaning of Civil Rights proscriptions–as understood by Senator Hubert Humphrey and his colleagues of the 1964 Congress to be "*without* regard to race, sex, national origin, religious orientation–into their exact