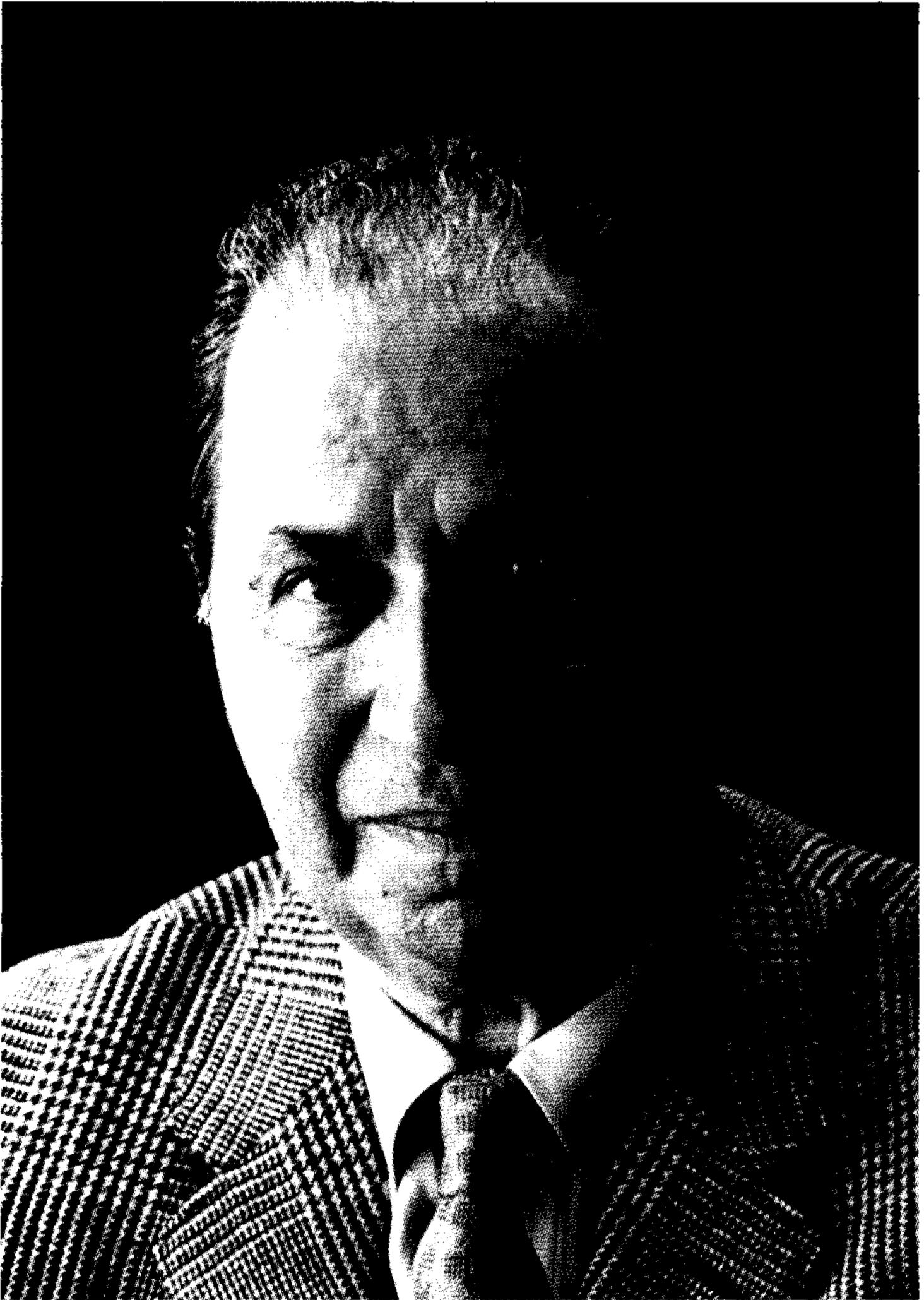

Part I
Mortimer J. Adler



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Great Books, Democracy, And Truth*

I

Because of its title, *The Closing of the American Mind*, by Allan Bloom, sold widely, probably much more widely than it was read. Its misleading but attention-grabbing subtitle: *How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*, lamented the failure of our colleges to serve our democratic society, but paid little attention to the dismal deficiencies of basic schooling in the United States, which are much more important as far as serving democracy is concerned.

With regard to the academic malaise that Mr. Bloom describes, but mistakenly regards as recent, his analysis of its causes is both inaccurate and inadequate. Worse, his slight effort to propose a cure falls far short of what must be done to make our schools responsive to democracy's needs and to enable our colleges to open the minds of their students to the truth.

These are serious indictments. But for me the book's most glaring defect is with regard to the undergraduate use of the great books over the last sixty years, and the more recent introduction of them to basic schooling by the Paideia program. Allan Bloom either has no knowledge of these facts or is gravely at fault for neglecting to report them. There is but one reference in *The Closing of the American Mind* to the "good old great books approach." Nevertheless, he proposes that approach as a remedy for the reform of our colleges.

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Before Allan Bloom was born, I was a student in the first great books seminar that John Erskine taught at Columbia University in 1921. From 1923 to 1929, with Mark Van Doren, I taught great books seminars at Columbia University. At the invitation of Robert M. Hutchins, President of the University of Chicago, I brought the great books educational program to Chicago in 1930, and Hutchins and I taught the great books there long before Allan Bloom arrived on the scene. We continued teaching them while he was a young student at the University of Chicago.

Allan Bloom either is ignorant of the work that had been done at Columbia and at the University of Chicago; or worse, he intentionally ignored it in order to foster the impression that his recommendation—that the great books be read by college students—was his own educational innovation. However, this interpretation of his failure to tip his hat to his many predecessors, especially those at his own university, is partly negated by the fact that he refers to “the good *old* great books approach” (*italics added*). Hence, one might conclude that his recommendation of the “great books approach” is qualified by the condition that they be read and taught in the style that he, Allan Bloom, and his teacher, Leo Strauss, have read and taught them.

That is most certainly not the way that John Erskine, Mark Van Doren, Robert Hutchins, Stringfellow Barr, Scott Buchanan, Jacques Barzun, Lionel Trilling, Otto Bird (*the last three of whom were students of mine*), and many others taught them long before Allan Bloom arrived at the University of Chicago. When I come to the consideration of the great books in relation to philosophical truth, I will try to explain why the dialectical rather than the doctrinal style of reading and teaching the great books is much to be preferred in the education of the young.

II

Erskine’s great innovation was the undergraduate seminar in which students and teacher sat around a table and engaged in critical conversation about the ideas in an assigned text. Erskine developed the first list of some sixty great books to be read by college juniors and seniors. Nothing like it ever existed before in undergraduate instruction. Seminars, in the German style, had been conducted, but they were only for Ph.D. candidates and for the consideration of their doctoral researches.

Erskine’s original reading list has been considerably revised and expanded since the early 1920s—at Columbia itself, at the University of Chicago, at Saint John’s College, and at other institutions (Notre Dame, Saint Mary’s College) that adopted the great books seminars—but all subsequent lists of great books have retained about 85 percent of Erskine’s original list.

In 1928 a grant from the Carnegie Corporation enabled Scott Buchanan (who later became Dean of Saint John's College in Annapolis) and me to organize fifteen great books seminars for adults in New York City. This, so far as I know, was the first attempt to employ the reading and discussion of great books as a major form of continued learning for adults, later to become a national program under the auspices of the Great Books Foundation. There were two leaders for each of these seminars.

Before Hutchins went to Chicago, he and I discussed the Erskine list of great books that I had been teaching at Columbia. Hutchins confessed that in his undergraduate years at Yale, he had not read more than three or four of those books. Hutchins knew that his duties as president of the University of Chicago would get in the way of his own education unless he himself taught a course in which he had to read the books he had not read in college. He asked me to come to Chicago mainly for the purpose of teaching a great books seminar for entering freshmen that he and I would conduct as Mark Van Doren and I had done at Columbia. We did so from 1930 until 1948. From that, many other achievements followed.

In 1936, Hutchins established a Committee on the Liberal Arts. He invited Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan of the University of Virginia to join us in planning an ideal, completely required curriculum for a liberal arts college. The reading and seminar discussion of great books for four years were central to that curriculum. This resulted in a greatly expanded list of great books, including works in mathematics and the natural sciences that had been for the most part absent from the original Erskine list. It also resulted, in 1937, in the establishment of the completely required New Program at Saint John's College, the fiftieth anniversary of which has recently been celebrated. The renown of Saint John's College, which was generally known as "the great books college," led other institutions in the 1940s, such as Notre Dame and Saint Mary's, to adopt modified versions of the program.

There were other, even more far-reaching results of what had been started at Columbia and Chicago.

In 1940, I published *How to Read a Book*, which should have been entitled *How to Read a Great Book*. That volume contained in its appendix a list of the great books, one that enlarged Erskine's original list and the one in use at the University of Chicago and at Saint John's College. It was a best-seller in 1940 and has been in print ever since. It has been used by many high schools and colleges in English courses as an instrument for cultivating skills in reading, and was revised in 1974 by Charles Van Doren and me.

In the 1940s, Hutchins and I also established the Great Books Foundation for the purpose of promoting great books seminars for adults all

across the country. In that connection, I developed the first manual of instruction for the guidance of ordinary lay persons in the conduct of great books seminars. I also trained the first generation of seminar leaders in Chicago. During that same period, Hutchins and I conducted a great books seminar for Chicago's civic leaders, many of whom were trustees of the University of Chicago. Begun in 1943, it continues to this day, although its membership has changed considerably.

There are still other significant developments of the great books movement. The University of Chicago operated extension courses for adults in University College, which was then called "the downtown college." With the enthusiastic endorsement of Dean Cyril Houle of that college, I outlined another modification of the Saint John's program. It was called "The Basic Program of Liberal Education for Adults" and began its long and successful career in the late 1940s. Allan Bloom and other students of Leo Strauss at the University of Chicago were among the young men who were enlisted to teach the great books in that program. It was his first teaching job.

In the great books seminars that Hutchins and I conducted for Chicago's civic leaders at the University Club were Walter and Elizabeth Paepeke. Their growing interest in the great books as an educational instrument for adults led in the early 1950s to the establishment of the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. Starting out with just great books seminars, the Aspen seminars, especially the Executive Seminars, developed in other directions, but a handful of great books has always been at the core of the reading lists.

Another by-product of the great books seminars that Hutchins and I conducted at the University Club was the publication in 1952 by Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., of the Great Books of the Western World. William Benton, then a vice president of the University of Chicago, was a participant in that University Club seminar. When in 1943, he became owner and publisher of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., he asked Hutchins and me to edit a set of great books for it to publish. We worked hard on that project for eight years, during which time I invented and produced the *Syntopicon* of the great ideas to accompany the set.

Then, on a grant from the Ford Foundation, the Institute for Philosophical Research was established to undertake a dialectical examination of the great ideas. Since then, it has published a series of books, beginning with a two-volume work, entitled *The Idea of Freedom*. Finally, in 1982, after three years' work with a group of eminent associates, I wrote and published *The Paideia Proposal*, an educational manifesto that called for a radical reform of basic schooling (kindergarten through twelfth grade) in the United States, and outlined a completely required curriculum that in-

volved great books seminars in elementary and secondary schools.

I mention all this as background because *The Closing of the American Mind* and the reviews of it—both adverse and favorable—have made me realize that it is necessary to retell the story of the great books movement for the present academic generation, whose memories do not go further back than the 1960s, or at most, the end of the Second World War. It is also necessary to restate as clearly as possible the fundamental notions that underlie the selection of the great books, the proper way to discuss them in seminars, their use in a truly democratic system of education, and their relation to the pursuit of truth.

I would like, first, to discuss the ideal of a truly democratic system of education, which does not yet exist in this country and which Bloom's book nowhere considers. Second, I think it necessary to examine truth and error in the great books, and their bearing on the proper way to conduct discussions of them, which is the dialectical method, not the doctrinal style employed by Allan Bloom and his teacher, Leo Strauss. Third, I must deal with a problem that deeply concerns Allan Bloom—the prevalent skepticism about moral philosophy and the prevalence of subjectivism and relativism about values among students and professors—the causes of which Mr. Bloom inaccurately diagnoses. Finally, here and in the epilogue, I will set forth the fundamental notions and principles of the great books movement.

III

Many readers today think of democracy in twentieth-century terms as constitutional government with universal suffrage and the securing of natural, human rights. The other two quite different senses of democracy are the senses in which Plato and Aristotle in antiquity and Rousseau in the eighteenth century used the word: either for mob rule or for a constitutional government with citizenship restricted to men of property. In our terms, they used the word "democracy" to signify an oligarchy that conferred citizenship on men of small property instead of restricting it to those having large estates.¹

Neither for them nor for Allan Bloom, who admires the political philosophy of these oligarchs, does the word "democracy" stand for the political ideal—the only perfectly just form of government. That use of the

¹In Athens, at its most "democratic" extreme under Pericles, there were only 30,000 citizens in a population of 120,000. Excluded were women, slaves, and artisans.

word makes its first appearance in 1861 in John Stuart Mill's *Representative Government*. Mill was the first great political philosopher who spoke for universal suffrage, extending it to women and to the laboring classes. He thought that justice required securing political liberty and equality for all, with few exceptions. But in 1863 Mill was a reluctant democrat who feared the unenlightened self-interest of the working-class majority; and so advocated plural votes for the upper classes to help them defeat majority rule.

All of Mill's predecessors in Western political theory thought that democracy, in *their* sense of the term, was either the worst form of bad government or the least desirable of the good forms of government, and none had even the slightest conception or even conjecture of democracy, in the twentieth-century sense of the term, as a political ideal to be realized in the future.

Bloom's readers have to guess in which of these radically different senses of democracy he uses the word. On the one hand, he could not be complaining about the failure of our educational institutions to serve democracy if he did not think of it as a desirable form of government. On the other hand, can any reader of *The Closing of the American Mind* fail to detect the strong strain of elitism in Bloom's own thinking, as evidenced by his devotion to Plato, Rousseau, and Nietzsche, and by his advocacy of reading of the great books by relatively few in the student population, certainly not by all?

The recency of constitutional democracy in this country explains and may even justify our not yet having a truly democratic system of public schooling or institutions of higher learning that are concerned with making good citizens of those who attend our colleges.

In 1817, Thomas Jefferson, as much an oligarch as John Adams, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and all the rest of our founding fathers, called upon the Virginia legislature to give three years of common schooling to all the children of the state. After three years, he advocated dividing the children into those destined for labor and those destined for leisure and learning (and citizenship and public office), and sending only the latter to college.

In our twentieth-century understanding of the term "democracy," Jefferson's educational program was thoroughly antidemocratic, but it still exists in the United States today. Though virtually all the children in our schools are now destined to become citizens, we still divide them into the college-bound and those not going from high school to college. The quality of schooling given the non-college-bound does not prepare them for citizenship or for a life enriched by continued learning; nor, I should add, does the quality of education given the college-bound when they get to college. It is still a fundamentally antidemocratic system of schooling with

a sharp differentiation between two tracks, one for those of inferior ability and one for their betters.

The first real departure from Jefferson's antidemocratic policy (dominating American education from 1817 to the present day) occurred in this century with startling pronouncements by John Dewey and Robert Hutchins. *The Paideia Proposal* in 1982 was dedicated to them because of their commitment to a democratic system of education.

In 1900, John Dewey said that the kind of schooling that the best and wisest parents would want for their children is precisely the kind of schooling that the community should want for all its children. Any other policy if acted upon, he said, would defeat democracy.

In his epoch-making book, *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey enunciated a position the opposite of Jefferson's. He said all the children in our nation, now that it was on its way to becoming democratic, had the same destiny—to lead lives in which they would earn a living, act as intelligent citizens of the republic, and make an effort to lead a decent and enriched human life.

Bloom's book does not manifest the slightest commitment to a program for giving *all* the children the same quality of schooling to enable them to fulfill their common destiny. Nor does it give its readers any indication that the most grievous failure of our schools and colleges to serve democracy, now that democracy has at last come into existence, lies in the early differentiation of students, with different tracks for different students. In the early 1930s President Hutchins was asked whether great books seminars, then open only to a picked handful of students, should be accessible to all the students in our colleges. His brief reply was crisp and clear. He said that the best education for the best was the best education for all. Great books seminars in our public schools and in our colleges should be available to all the students there, not only to the few who elect to take them or who are specially selected. That is not the answer to be found in Allan Bloom's book.

IV

Some basic truths are to be found in the great books, but many more errors will also be found there, because a plurality of errors is always to be found for every single truth. One way of discovering this is to detect the contradictions that can be found in the books of every great author. Being human works, they are seldom free from contradictions. Skill in reading and thinking is required to find them. But, given that skill, finding contradictions in a book puts one on the high-road in the pursuit of truth. The truth must lie on one or the other side of every contradiction. It is there for us to detect when we are able to resolve the contradiction in favor of one

side or the other.

More important is the fact that the great books contradict one another on many points in the various fields of discourse in which they engage. Once again, it must be said that the relation between truth and error is a one-many relationship: if the truth on a given point is thought to be in one or several of the great books, contradictions on that same point are likely to be found in many more great books.

In any case, it is clear that, if the great books contradict one another on many points, it must follow that many errors as well as some truths are to be found there. That is why the great books are such useful instruments in the pursuit of truth. For every truth, understanding all the errors it refutes is indispensable.

What I have just said holds particularly for the philosophical and theological works that belong in any comprehensive list of great books—the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Mill, William James. Since Bloom and his teacher, Leo Strauss, are specialists in the field of moral and political philosophy, I will draw my examples from that field of discourse.

If Aristotle's political philosophy is thought to contain a number of fundamental truths, then errors must be found in Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel. If J.S. Mill's political philosophy is thought to contain some truths not found elsewhere, then on these points errors must be found in Aristotle. If Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is thought to contain a number of basic truths in moral philosophy, then on these points serious errors must be found in Plato, Epictetus, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche.

Though the same can be said for works in other branches of philosophy—metaphysics, the philosophy of mind, and the theory of knowledge—the examples I have given from the field of moral and political philosophy will suffice to enable me to distinguish between the right and wrong way to teach the great books, if the aim in using them is to teach students how to think and how to pursue the truth. Since the kind of teaching done by Leo Strauss and by his students, among them Allan Bloom, represents in my judgment the wrong way to teach the great books in our public schools and in our undergraduate colleges, let me describe the difference between what I consider to be the right and wrong way to read the great books.

The difference between Strauss' method of reading and teaching the great books and the method that Hutchins and I had adopted (the method also used by Erskine and Van Doren at Columbia, and by Barr and Buchanan at Saint John's College) lies in the distinction between a doctrinal and a dialectical approach. The doctrinal method is an attempt to

read as much truth as possible (and no errors) into the work of a particular author, usually devising a special interpretation, or by discovering that special secret of an author's intentions. This method may have some merit in the graduate school where students aim to acquire narrowly specialized scholarship about a particular author. But it is the opposite of the right method to be used in conducting great books seminars in schools and colleges where the aim is learning to think and the pursuit of truth.

When in the late 1940s Leo Strauss came to the University of Chicago and we were both on the faculty teaching great books, President Hutchins suggested that I get to know him. We met several times and discussed our reading of Plato and Aristotle. I soon learned that Strauss read these great authors as if they were devoid of any serious errors, in spite of the fact that on many points they appeared to contradict one another. I also learned that for Strauss the radical changes in our social and political institutions that have occurred since antiquity had no bearing on the likelihood that Aristotle made grave errors about natural slavery and about the natural inferiority of women. In his view, these were not errors. After a few conversations, I told Hutchins that I found talking to Strauss about philosophical books and problems thoroughly unprofitable from the point of view of leading great books seminars in the college.

The word "disciple" stresses the differences between the doctrinal and the dialectical teaching of the great books. Leo Strauss was preeminently the kind of doctrinal teacher who made disciples out of his students, disciples who followed in his footsteps and repeated again and again what they learned from him. The doctrinal teacher of disciples enables them to learn what the master thinks. The dialectical teaching of students enables them to think for themselves. I would go further and say that the doctrinal method *indoctrinates*, and only the dialectical method *teaches*.

Those of us who teach the great books dialectically exert an influence on our students, but only so far as a good use of their minds is concerned. We never make disciples of them. Strauss' use of the doctrinal method results in students learning what the master thinks about the work under consideration. I would even go so far as to say that the doctrinal method is most appropriate in reading a sacred book. It is like the orthodox Hassidic approach to reading the Talmud. But it is totally inappropriate in liberal education at the college level or in our public schools.

V

I come now to the skepticism about moral values that prevails among college students and their teachers. I will treat this matter briefly because I have written many essays that bear on the subject. One in particular was written for *Harper's Magazine* under the title "This Prewar Generation"

(1940). As the title indicates, the college students of that time generally held the view that judgments about moral values were matters of subjective opinion, different for different persons, and relative to the circumstances of time and place.

Before I go on, let me say what is meant by the distinction between subjective and objective and between relative and absolute. The subjective is that which differs for you, for me, and for other individuals. The objective is that which is the same for all of us. The relative is that which varies with the circumstances of time and place. The absolute is that which is invariant always and everywhere.

In "This Prewar Generation," I pointed out that subjectivism and relativism about value judgments on the part of students emanated from the same stance on the part of their teachers, especially their professors in philosophy and in the social sciences. At that time, the reign of philosophical positivism among Anglo-American professors gave rise to the doctrine of noncognitive ethics. This meant that moral philosophy was not knowledge, not a body of valid truths. Some went so far as to say that judgments that contained the words "ought" and "ought not" were neither true nor false. There were no prescriptive truths.

At the same time, what was known to sociologists and cultural anthropologists—that the tribal or ethnic mores differed from tribe to tribe, from culture to culture, and from time to time—led them to the dogmatic denial that there were any objectively valued moral judgments. As the positivists among the philosophers dismissed ethics as noncognitive, so the social scientists denied ethics objectivity and universality by putting the members of one tribe, culture, or ethnic group into what they called "the ethnocentric predicament," which meant they were unable to make objective judgments about values espoused in other tribes and cultures.

Is there any wonder that subjectivism and relativism should have been prevalent among college students exposed to such indoctrination by their professors in the 1930s and 1940s? That indoctrination has continued right down to the present. The moral skepticism among the students is the same as it was then and its cause is the same, though the vocabulary in which it is expressed may have changed in detail.

More recently I have returned to the defense of objective and absolute truth in moral philosophy by reviewing books by two eminent professors of philosophy—Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* and a book by Bernard Williams entitled *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Both books concede the dismal failure of philosophy since the seventeenth century to develop an ethics that can claim to have objective truth. Both books, the first more explicitly than the second, give Nietzsche credit for exposing the failures of modern thinkers to develop a sound moral philosophy. Both books con-

cede that Aristotle's *Ethics* was sound in Greek antiquity. MacIntyre, however, called for its revision to make it acceptable to us today, and Williams rejected it as no longer tenable. The critiques I wrote of these two books argued that Aristotle's *Ethics*, without the revision proposed by MacIntyre, is just as sound in the twentieth century as it was in the fourth century B.C.

Against the background of what I have just said, I have only two points to make about the mistakes of Allan Bloom in dealing with the impoverishment of student souls in the late 1960s and continuing until the present day. If by "impoverishment" he is referring to their lack of firm dedication to objective and absolute moral truths, then that impoverishment existed as well in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. He is simply wrong as a matter of historical fact.

The other mistake made by Bloom concerns the causes that generated the result he deplores and wishes he knew how to remedy. Ascribing contemporary skepticism about moral values to the influence of Nietzsche's nihilism is wide of the mark. The two causes were those already mentioned—philosophical positivism and the relativism of sociology and cultural anthropology. Nietzsche was not at all in the picture when these began to influence American thought; and if that has changed recently and his influence has become evident, it is still a minor cause as compared with the others that I mentioned.

VI

The great books, read and discussed with an eye out for the basic truths and the equally basic errors or mistakes to be found in them, should be a part of everyone's general, liberal, and humanistic education. This program should begin with what might be called "junior great books" in the early grades, continued throughout basic schooling with more and more difficult books, and be pursued on an even higher level in college. It would still be everyone's obligation to read many of these books again in the course of adult learning, for the greatest among them cannot ever be plumbed to their full depths. They are inexhaustibly rereadable for pleasure and profit.

A genuine great books program does not aim at historical knowledge of cultural antiquities or at achieving a thin veneer of cultural literacy. On the contrary, it aims only at the general enlightenment of its participants, an essential ingredient in their initial liberal education and something to be continued throughout a lifetime of learning. Its objective is to develop basic intellectual skills—the skills of critical reading, attentive listening, precise speech, and, above all, reflective thought. Through the use of these skills, the reading and seminar discussion of the great books seeks to help students pass from less to greater understanding of the basic ideas in the

Western intellectual tradition and of the controversial issues with which those great ideas abound.

Let me repeat: the controlling purpose behind this recommendation is twofold. First, only through reading and discussing books that are over one's head can the skills of critical reading and reflective thought be developed. Second, of the three educational objectives—acquisition of knowledge, development of intellectual skills, and increase of understanding of basic ideas and issues—the third is by far the most important, and cannot be achieved without seminar discussions of truly great or almost-great books.

Finally, the earlier the reading and discussions begin and the more persistently they are continued in college and in the learning of adults, involving as it must the oft-repeated reading and discussion of the same books, the more individuals will be enabled to reach their ultimate goal in the later years of life—that of becoming generally educated human beings.

No one ever becomes a generally educated person in school, college, or university, for youth itself is an insuperable obstacle to becoming generally educated. That is why the very best thing that our educational institutions can do, so far as general education is concerned (not the training of specialists), is to afford preparation for continued learning by their students after they leave these institutions behind them. That cannot be done unless the skills of learning are cultivated in school and unless, in schools and colleges, the students are initiated into the understanding of great ideas and issues and are motivated to continue to seek an ever-increasing understanding of them.

It is necessary here to distinguish, sharply and clearly, the reading and seminar discussion of great books as a lifelong educational program from the current misuse of the phrase “great books” in connection with courses in Western civilization that college students are required to take as part of a core curriculum.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, there were no great books of Western civilization that were not of European origin. Until the nineteenth century, all were written by white males. Hence if one were to read all or almost all of the great books of Western civilization, most of them would, perforce, be written by white, male Europeans.

It is certainly arguable that under the radically changed circumstances of the twentieth century, college students should be required to study global civilization, both Eastern and Western, not just Western or European. It is also arguable that many books written in this or the last century, books which are clearly not great, should be studied for their relevance to the most pressing problems of our age. But all such arguments have nothing whatsoever to do with the educational program associated

with a list of great Western books, most of which were written by white European males.

The educational purpose of the great books program is not to study Western civilization. Its aim is not to acquire knowledge of historical facts. It is rather to understand the great ideas. Its objective is not to become acquainted with the variety of conflicting cultures and groups that engender the problems that confront us in the contemporary world. Its controlling purposes, as I have already pointed out, are solely to learn how to read critically and to think reflectively about basic ideas and issues, not just in school and college but throughout one's life.

For that purpose, the minimum list of great books to be read would include at least the works of 60 authors. A more intensive program would extend that number to 125. At the college level, the minimal program should include seminars once a week for two years; at the maximum, it should include two seminars a week for four years. At the level of basic schooling, it would involve seminars once a week for at least nine years—from grade three to grade twelve.

I mention these numbers lest it be thought that a required single semester or a one-year college course in the history of civilization, Western or global, with twelve or fifteen traditionally recognized Western classics in the list of required readings, is even, in small part, a great books program. Such survey courses are mainly history courses, conducted primarily by lectures. They may be supplemented by small group discussions that only faintly resemble great books seminars.

To recapitulate: A true great books program is not a course in the history of Western civilization, nor is it devoted to the scholarly study of the books read. It is concerned primarily with the discussion of the great ideas and issues to be found in those books. It may, therefore, be asked why the works read should consist entirely of works written by Westerners, both European and American, and not by authors who belong to one of the four or five major cultural traditions of the Far East.

The answer is simply that the basic ideas and issues of our *one* Western intellectual tradition are *not* the basic ideas and issues in the *four* or *five* intellectual traditions of the Far East. In the distant future there may be a single, worldwide cultural community with one set of common basic ideas and issues; but until that comes into existence, becoming a generally educated human being in the West involves understanding the basic ideas and issues that abound in the intellectual tradition to which one is heir either by the place of one's birth or by immigration to the West.