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The Dialectic of the University: His Master's Voice

REINHOLD MARTIN

During the first three months of 1872, a twenty-seven-year-old professor of classical philology delivered five lectures before the Öffentliche Akademische Gesellschaft (or Public Academy) at the University of Basel. In the last of his lectures, Friedrich Nietzsche offered this definition of the modern university: "One speaking mouth, with many ears, and half as many writing hands— there you have to all appearances, the external academic apparatus; the university education machine in action."[1] In Nietzsche's university, a newfound zone of academic freedom separated professor and audience, but, as he pointedly remarked to his European listeners, standing behind it all, at some "modest distance," was the state, to remind all concerned "that *it* is the aim, the goal, the be-all and end-all, of this curious speaking and hearing procedure."[2]

Nietzsche and his extramural audience were bound together by a continental university system that reflected the Prussian reforms begun around 1810, by which universities became knowledge-seeking instruments of the new nation-states, reorganized around the kind of primary research the young philologist was doing in Basel as he prepared to publish his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872).[3] But even in translation, we can hear the indignation in Nietzsche's voice at what he took to be servitude masked as freedom, administered at a distance by feeble, sycophantic bureaucrats, guardians of a national culture dedicated to nothing more than their (and its) self-preservation.

In the United States, on the other hand, the authority that stood at a "modest distance" from the speaking and writing machine of the university in the latter nineteenth century was less the state than the church. True, the small denominational colleges founded during the colonial period began rapidly expanding, in the 1870s, into large research universities, largely on the German model.[4] And yes, these East Coast institutions were joined by a cohort of new colleges and universities stretching to the Pacific coast, ranging from the secular, state-funded land grant institutions established during the Civil War, to privately funded research institutions such as Johns Hopkins University, which opened in 1876. But in general, and although federal, state, and municipal bodies were central in establishing and governing the land grants

and administering educational legitimacy, the church—or rather, this or that Protestant denomination with ties to business—watched from a "modest distance" over the American university, as ears and hands recorded spoken words in the new lecture halls and seminar rooms built on religious foundations.[5]

Voices

During the years of Nietzsche's professorship at Basel a small American college encountered financial difficulties. That college had been founded on borrowed money in 1857 under the auspices of the Baptist church and with an overly optimistic name: the University of Chicago. Unable to pay its mortgage debts, the college entered foreclosure and ceased doing business in 1886. But universities are rarely founded only once; they tend to be refounded, repeatedly. So it was with the University of Chicago. In 1885, a number of the original college's constituents attempted a rescue operation that proposed starting afresh in Chicago's Morgan Park suburb. In the wake of the original failure, the Chicago group, who were active within the American Baptist Education Society, had turned their attention to educational outreach, from preparatory schools to academies to colleges, in order to compete with other, more established denominations prevalent in the Western and Midwestern states, principally Congregationalists and Methodists. A Baptist college located in Chicago would serve as the fulcrum for such a regional strategy.[6]

Unable to raise sufficient funds locally, the Chicago Baptists sought out their denomination's wealthiest member, the New York businessman and founder of Standard Oil, John D. Rockefeller. By this time, Rockefeller had embarked on what would become a major philanthropic career. The Baptist church and, specifically, Baptist education were among his causes. Competing proposals for universities and seminaries in New York and Washington led the Chicago group to build consensus within the Education Society by scaling down their plans to include only a college that could, but did not necessarily have to, evolve into a graduate institution over time. After much cajoling from the Chicagoans and their intermediaries, Rockefeller provided the endowment on the condition that the group raise a comparable amount toward land and buildings. This condition was largely met in early 1890 when the department store magnate Marshall Field, himself a Presbyterian, donated land in the city's Hyde Park neighborhood.

With some reluctance, the Yale philologist and theologian William Rainey Harper accepted the presidency of the new University of Chicago, which was formally incorporated on September 10, 1890, with Rockefeller as the first of six signatories. The campus plan was designed by Henry Ives Cobb, and

construction began in 1891. Although not formally a Baptist institution, its articles of incorporation required that two-thirds of the trustees, as well as the president, be Baptist church members. But ecclesiastical affiliations can be deceptive; deep in the infrastructures of knowledge, secular and religious modes frequently coincide. When they do, old stories about the lucid gaze of enlightenment or about the progressively clarified voice of reason are inadequate if not simply wrong.[7] The same goes for the Weberian schema that defines European modernity as the Protestant calling sublimated into managerial capitalism.

Consider the sound that travels between speaking mouths and listening ears, leaving aside for the moment the equally important cultural technique of students taking notes. As the historian of American Christianity Leigh Eric Schmidt reminds us, the traditional association of Protestantism with audition—along the lines of Luther's famous claim, "The ears alone are the organs of a Christian"—perpetuates a division of the aural from the ocular that hides many acoustical affinities among Protestantism, Catholicism, and, to a lesser degree, other monotheisms.[8] Schmidt points out at length that, as in Europe, the American nineteenth century saw numerous efforts to demystify belief in prophetic or oracular revelation by simulating its effects in mechanical speaking machines, including phonographs. As he shows, these "oracles of reason" had the paradoxical consequence of materializing the very voices they sought to dispel. The paradox reached an apotheosis of sorts in the mid-twentieth century when, Schmidt informs us, the Danish art historian Frederik Poulsen, an authority on Delphi who had done his graduate work at Göttingen, fitted a chiseled oracular bust with a speaking tube and used his own voice to reproduce "god's voice," thus replacing what he called the "religious fraud" of speaking statues with the self-described "powerful and strange" voice of professorial reason.[9] Relatedly, in Chicago, a dialectic of dialectics among textual and aural modes arose when, in a university founded on Protestant belief, ears hearing voices and responding to calls hooked up with hands writing lists, eyes reading them, and mouths speaking around tables, in an intermedial circuit. What had been sorted into distinct media platforms with the invention of specialized fields like acoustics began to split and combine. The result was nothing less than an intermedial feedback loop, a series of media antinomies by which knowledge and its dissemination were defined.[10]

We already get a hint of what was to come from the new Chicago president Harper's own words, in a lecture delivered to students sometime before 1904 and later published in a slim volume titled *Religion and the Higher Life*. There, Harper succinctly states his own views on religion with a simple

command: "[T]he sum and substance of the Christian faith is found in two words, 'Follow me.'"[11] These words were not spoken in a university chapel, and the original lack of emphasis on such a building was consistent with Harper's theological convictions, which downplayed symbolic ritual in favor of Bible study, which Harper sought to place at the center of both academic and nonacademic life.[12] We can surmise, then, that in the early years of this religiously affiliated university, which was at that point really a coeducational college charged with the moral education of its students, "follow me" meant, in essence: listen, take notes, read, and exercise practical religious and moral judgment in the conduct of everyday affairs. For Harper and many (but not all) of his faculty, all of whom, incidentally, were expected to participate in weekly chapel, this was perfectly compatible with scientific rationality.[13]

Despite the Baptist origins and the Baptist money, then, and although Cobb's plan included a centrally located Gothic Revival chapel, none was built during the first three decades of the University of Chicago's existence. Harper's own priority was a library, which was finally built in 1912 to designs by Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge as a memorial to Harper himself. Although from the beginning students at the new university were required to attend daily chapel, the lack of a dedicated space of sufficient size made this difficult. For a time, chapel was held in Cobb Hall, but already by 1897 a "provisional solution" had to be devised whereby each division of the university would meet once a week for morning assembly, which included brief religious services. Upon its completion in 1903, Leon Mandel Hall became the site for the largest of these assemblies.[14]

Mandel Hall was designed by Shepley, Rutan & Coolidge as part of an ensemble known as the Tower Group, located at the northeast corner of the original set of quadrangles and partly funded by an 1895 Rockefeller gift.[15] In 1903 the hall hosted the debut concert of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and immediately became an important venue for performances of all kinds, including "orchestra concerts, dramatic performances, lectures, educational conferences, oratorical conferences, intercollegiate debates, athletic mass meetings, daily chapel assemblies, Sunday preaching services, the University Convocations, and other assemblies almost without number."[16] Laying the cornerstone for Mandel Hall, Harper reportedly said of the campus's first chapel in Cobb Hall that the latter could no longer accommodate "one third of the students"; hence the need for a replacement. University historian Thomas Goodspeed later observed that Harper's presidential successor, Harry Pratt Judson, could have said the same about Mandel Hall twenty-five years hence: "Remaining most useful for all ordinary demands on it, for great occasions it [Mandel Hall] was outgrown, and the University waited for the

Chapel provided for it in the Founder's last gift, which would be commodious and beautiful, capable of meeting the religious and other needs of the growing University."[17]

Following Harper's death in 1906, Rockefeller was the prime mover behind a dedicated chapel building. Having already given approximately $25 million to the university, in 1910 he made a final gift of $10 million, of which he stipulated that at least $1.5 million be used for the construction and furnishing of a university chapel.[18] In his letter of designation, Rockefeller pointedly asserted that the chapel would confirm that "the University in its ideal, is dominated by the spirit of religion, all its departments are inspired by the religious feeling, and all its work is directed to the highest ends."[19] These words were visible on the chapel's dedication plaque when the building opened on October 28, 1928. The truth they spoke, however, was primarily audible, rather than visible, in the chapel itself.

The historian of religion George M. Marsden has designated Harper's University of Chicago as the "high-water mark of liberal Protestant university building in which Christianity played an explicit role."[20] In contrast, and with palpable regret, Marsden describes the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, completed twenty years later, as "one of the clearest cases of a building erected in memory of a fading religious spirit."[21] The chapel's strained symbolism, coupled with the university's loosening of formal religious ties and rituals (despite Rockefeller's wishes) and the prominence of Chicago faculty in the sciences and social sciences might lead us to agree with this assessment if certain technical details did not suggest otherwise.

In 1918, with the Rockefeller funds in hand, Judson selected the New York–based architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue to execute the chapel commission. The idiom was to be Gothic Revival, in reference to European cathedrals (which Goodhue studied closely) and in keeping with existing campus buildings designed mainly by Cobb and by Charles Allerton Coolidge. Following Goodhue's sudden death in 1924, work on the chapel was completed by the successor firm of Mayers, Murray and Phillip. Much can be said about the resulting building's location near the campus threshold, its monumental scale (it was to be the university's tallest building to date), its stony exterior, and its stripped-down Gothic proportions and detailing. But here I
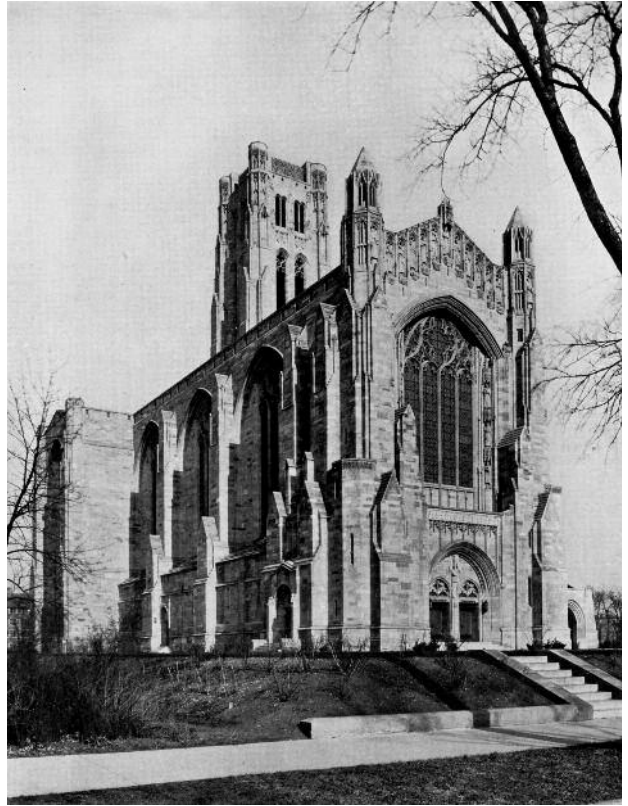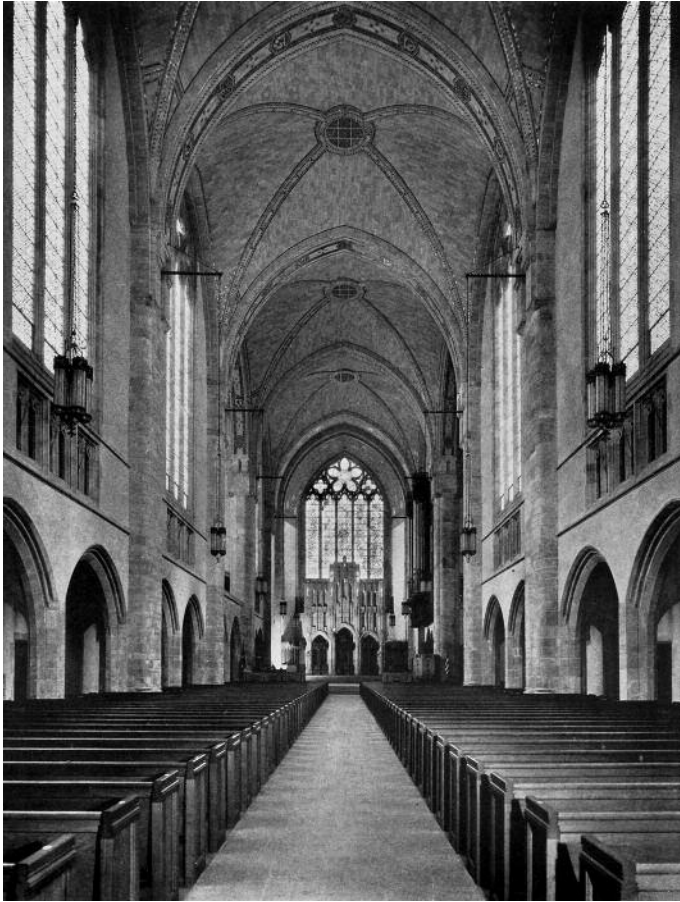
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue
Associates and Mayers, Murray
and Phillip. University of Chicago
Chapel, 1928. Nave looking
toward the chancel. Chicago
Architectural Photographing Co.

want to concentrate on an aspect of the building's interior that articulates what had become of the speaking and listening machine that drew Nietzsche's ire, as it was reformatted in newly founded research institutions like the University of Chicago.

In 1926, Floyd R. Watson, a professor of physics at the University of Illinois/Urbana who had gained prominence in the new field of acoustic science, together with his colleague from the architecture department, James M. White, were engaged by the University of Chicago to study the acoustical treatment of the chapel interior proposed by the Goodhue firm. The architects' designs called for an unspecified amount of acoustic tile in the vaulted ceiling and what was known as Akoustolith plaster on the walls.[22] The Guastavino Company, which had been collaborating with Goodhue since his earlier partnership with Ralph Adams Cram, were to supply the tile and the acoustic plaster.[23]

At this point the most significant acoustic issue for churches, auditoria, and lecture halls was the overlap of sounds and blending of words due to reverberation. The definitive solution, which included an equation and a new unit of measure (the sabin), had been developed in the 1910s by Wallace C. Sabine, the physicist pioneer of acoustic science, whom Goodhue had introduced to Raphael Guastavino in 1911, and with whom he collaborated until Sabine's death in 1919.[24] Sabine was a strict empiricist; he began his acoustical work with modifications to the auditorium in Harvard's newly constructed Fogg Art Museum in 1895 and achieved nationwide notoriety through his collaboration with Charles F. McKim on the Boston Symphony Hall in 1900. Goodhue may have consulted Sabine while developing the initial designs for the chapel; in any event, he was intimately familiar with Sabine's approach. Watson and White's assessment also conformed with that approach by recommending that a total of 32,000 square feet of sound-absorbing plaster and tiles be installed on the ceiling and the side walls. They were confident that such an acoustical treatment, combined with the correct placement and enclosure of the organ, would render the music performed in
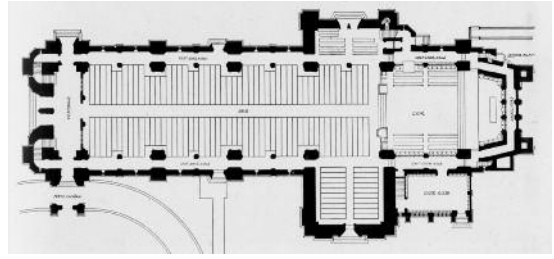
the chapel with what they called "the quality of excellence desired." The acousticians were less certain, however, about the spoken voice.[25]

The report prompted L.R. Flook, the university official in charge of the project, to ask his architects with some impatience whether anything could be done about "improving the acoustics for speaking."[26] Armed with another acoustical report by Paul E. Sabine, the late Wallace Sabine's cousin and successor, the architects suggested using Guastavino's proprietary Akoustolith tile on the ceiling vaults and either Akoustolith plaster or Sabinite, a competing product from U.S. Gypsum, on the walls of the nave as well as in the transept and the tower. In the event, Sabinite won out over Akoustolith and the recommendations were carried out.[27] Not incidentally, the design also called for hard (nonabsorbent) plaster in the choir and aisle walls in the south gallery, as well as behind the organ.[28]

A few months before the Rockefeller Memorial Chapel opened in 1928, Watson summarized the latest thinking on reverberation in auditoria as follows:

> Conditions must be created by which the speaker, as he begins to talk, will find an immediate reinforcement of his voice without any effort on his part, so that he is given the confidence that comes with the assurance that his speech is at its best and that it is reaching its auditors.[29]

Shortly thereafter Watson found that the acoustics in the chapel satisfied these new criteria—through the subtle distinction, we can assume, between acoustically treated and untreated surfaces. Having tested the completed space with colleagues six days before it opened, he wrote to the building supervisor Flook that "[w]hen a speaker occupied the pulpit, he found a comforting reinforcement of his voice from the adjacent stone column that allowed him to 'hear himself,' and thus adjust his speech for best effect."[30] As Emily Thompson confirms but does not fully interpret, this reflected a change in acoustical thinking. Earlier, Watson's and Sabine's criteria for "perfect" auditorium acoustics had been limited to the experience of the *audience*; by the time Watson evaluated the results of his work at Rockefeller Chapel, his criteria had enlarged to include the auditory experience of the *speaker* as

well. In doing so, it divided the one from the other and the voice from itself.[31]

In her study of the early-twentieth-century American soundscape, Thompson argues that the engineered dampening of reverberation prior to the advent of electroacoustics yielded a quintessentially modern product: discrete sounds rationalized into serial units.[32] She notices the change in Watson's thinking and practice to allow speakers or performers to hear their own voices in space, but she underestimates its consequences. For, contrary to her model, at Chicago's Rockefeller Chapel what was established was not—or, was not *only*—calculated, noise-free communication between speaking mouths and listening ears. It was also a doubled-up psychic and acoustic space built around a short circuit made possible by the calculated absence of sound-absorbing materials near the pulpit and the lectern, which localized rapid reverberation (or what Watson calls "reinforcement") around the speaker. Outside this reverberant circuit, the audience, in principle, heard the speaker's voice as a series of deadened, mechanical sounds. While inside the circuit, the speaker, severed from his audience like Nietzsche's professor, heard himself speaking as the sound returned from around and behind him.[33] The acoustics of Rockefeller Chapel therefore split the speaking voice in two: the serial voice of reason audible in the pews, and the subtly reverberant voice of a displaced, sublimated god, a master standing at some "modest distance" and listening to himself, in a technical diagram that would become axiomatic for academic auditoria and lecture halls until microphones took over.

Tables

In apparent contrast, as William Clark has shown, the format of the modern research seminar developed out of the intimacy of early modern "professorial tables" (or student boarding arrangements), collegia, and learned societies, mainly in Germany (with deeper roots in seminary-like Protestant "convictoria"), as well as out of the tutorial system at Oxford and Cambridge. By the end of the eighteenth century, these philologically oriented research seminars began receiving state support, initially as separate institutions and then in universities, as they proliferated during the ensuing decades as a primary research environment along with the scientific laboratory. By and large retaining the formality of the earlier collegia, the German research seminar was, Clark argues, an important vehicle for the enactment and nurturing of academic charisma, albeit through the regular presentation of individually argued papers as disputational lessons rather than through informal conversation.[34] By the late nineteenth century, seminar- and laboratory-based research had begun also to predominate in the newly founded or reorganized American universities, where it retained what Clark calls its "cultic aspects."[35] Only

later was the seminar transformed in the United States into a pedagogical instrument devoted to teaching undergraduates how to read books. We can understand, then, how Nietzsche took the universities of his time and place to be organized around the listening-writing assemblage of "one speaking mouth" and "many pairs of ears" associated with the lecture or formal disputation. In seminars at the University of Chicago and elsewhere, however, speaking mouths multiplied and assembled around an infrastructure that doubled up the master's voice into a genial dialogue.

Rockefeller Memorial Chapel opened in October 1928. On the morning of November 19, 1929, Robert Maynard Hutchins gave his first speech from the chapel's pulpit as he assumed the presidency of the University of Chicago.[36] The following month, he recruited Mortimer J. Adler from Columbia University to join Chicago's philosophy department. Adler, a metaphysician with Aristotelian and Thomist leanings, was coolly received by his new colleagues, a number of whom were distinguished pragmatists and social philosophers.[37] Adler had been among the first students and later, tutors, in the "general honors" undergraduate curriculum at Columbia, which was initiated in 1921 by John Erskine, a noted professor of English literature. Hutchins, stimulated by a prior meeting with Adler in which they discussed the course, brought him in to institute something similar in the undergraduate curriculum at Chicago, to offset what Hutchins regarded as excessive specialization in the graduate schools.

The Columbia general honors course was a two-year seminar in which advanced undergraduates would read a comprehensive selection of canonical works in Western philosophy, literature, and science under the guidance of nonexpert tutors, led by Erskine, whose own expertise was limited to Elizabethan literature. As Erskine later wrote, somewhat disingenuously, he merely wanted the students "to read great books, the best sellers of ancient times, as spontaneously as they would read current best sellers," at the rate of a book a week, and "form their opinions at once in a free-for-all discussion."[38] Following on a two-year stint in Europe in which he helped set up and run a temporary university in the French town of Beaume for American soldiers on deployment, Erskine regarded the project as a welcome return to earlier efforts to persuade his colleagues to teach classic works in this manner.[39] But in its format, the honors course reiterated the administrative imagination that guided Erskine's activities during the war. For the Columbia general honors course was, above all and like the "great books" courses at Chicago that followed it, a list.

Recounting prewar Faculty Club debates on the matter, Erskine reproduced a letter from a dismayed colleague, who, fearing the end of "true scholarship

at Columbia College," argued for depth over breadth, in the conviction that "it is better that a man should get to know ten authors well in his last two years of college, than that he should learn the names of the eighty-four men presented to him on this list."[40] Unlike undergraduates at Chicago, those at Columbia were universally male, and decades would pass before the gender and racial uniformity of such lists ("eighty-four [white] men") would be openly contested in culture wars. Instead, around 1920, Erskine's lists, and Adler's after him, were mainly reactions against what these educators perceived as the laissez-faire system of elective courses adopted at Harvard and elsewhere around the turn of the century. The seminar format of the course also departed from tradition. The class met weekly for two hours on Wednesday evenings, a deliberate deviation from the norm of three fifty-minute sessions per week. Class sizes were limited to twenty-five or thirty students per section, by application.

Adler recalls that the inaugural seminar with Erskine was held around a "large oval table," a detail that is generally overlooked in discussions about the formation of literary canons.[41] Seated at this table, the form of which lacked a "head," were approximately twenty-five speaking mouths and twenty-five pairs of ears, plus those of the professors. Professors plural, since in their definitive form Columbia's general honors sections were taught in pairs. When Adler graduated from student to preceptor in general honors, his teaching partner was the poet and professor of English Mark Van Doren, who, according to Adler, asked the first question at the first class: "What is the ruling passion in the *Iliad*?"[42] Van Doren then "went around the table soliciting proposals from every member of the group," demonstrating that with a good opening question, "you can call on everyone in rapid succession to try his hand at answering it, and then, with a wide variety of answers on the table, you can play one against the other to carry the discussion forward." Failing that, the format provided another option, wherein, as Adler advises,

> the second leader can always intervene to try his hand at asking the same question in still another way to make it more intelligible; or as frequently happens, he can correct his partner's failure to understand someone else's response to the last question. Listening with the inner ear to answers is even more difficult than asking good questions.[43]

Cultivated amateurism was preferred over professional expertise since, as Adler complained, "[m]ost professionals teach by telling; amateurs, among whom Socrates was a paragon, teach by questioning."[44] The seminar therefore trained its teachers in a distinct set of pedagogical techniques: posing calculated questions, going rapidly around the table, putting responses "on

the table," listening with the "inner ear." To reinforce the dialogic premise, exams were oral rather than written. These techniques worked together to make knowledge that was strictly tabular in character, in two senses. Such knowledge centered on the seminar table—in its primordial oval form at Columbia and in countless cognate forms elsewhere—and also on the list. Moreover, eliciting responses from students around tables required an inner ear sensitive to resonance, pitch, tone, and timbre. Like the speaker-hearer at the lecture podium, but for different reasons, this new form of professorial attention was quite literally doubled up, so that it could listen and learn from its own leading questions. All of which was set into motion by an administrative imagination that fed off of lists meant to replace the book-a-week reading of modern best sellers with what Erskine's course called "Classics of Western Civilization." This, in order to avoid the stenographic abyss of the lecture, in which, as Adler writes, "the notes of the teacher become the notes of the student without passing through the minds of either."[45]

What seemed a hermeneutic exercise was therefore a logistical procedure. In one of several reflexive turns, Adler's most widely read work was the 1940 best-seller, *How to Read a Book*, which grew out of the pedagogy he brought to Chicago. But in 1927, just prior to meeting Hutchins, he had also published *Dialectic*, a rambling quarrel with empiricism that he regarded as a semisecular counterpart to Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologica*.[46] Adler's "summa dialectica," as he called it, takes its title to mean conversational or argumentative thinking in general, thus assimilating (or reducing) the "Hegelian dialectic"—in those days an academic "catch-word of disapproval or praise"—to the Platonic dialogue as treated by Aristotle, and the scholastic summa, or disputed question. From Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, whom he later admitted he was able to read only with difficulty and without conviction, Adler derived only the conclusion that "the mind can converse or dispute with itself"; hence, "[w]hat is required formally for dialectic is not two actually diverse minds, but rather an actual diversity or duality, an opposition or conflict" even "within the borders of a single mind."[47] Adler's book thereby recoded the format of the Columbia honors seminar, with its paired professors, into the language of philosophy. The recoding itself was confused. What mattered more was that the institutional authority of philosophy, and more specifically, metaphysics, could now be summoned in the name of curricular reform. This was most likely how Hutchins saw the matter when he hired Adler to join the University of Chicago faculty.

The pair began by planning a two-year honors seminar on "great books" based on Erskine's list, which they would teach together for twenty first-year

students chosen from a pool of eighty applicants. The class was assigned a special room, again with an oval table as a centerpiece and a stage. The discussions followed the same book-per-week format, and again the exams were oral rather than written.[48] At one point, after a dinner-table disagreement with Hutchins and Adler regarding the untranslatability of the "great books" into a common language (in this case, English), which ended with a whack on the head to Adler, Gertrude Stein visited the seminar to lead the discussion on Homer's *Odyssey*.[49] Within five years, the Adler-Hutchins seminar had become a talisman for what was by then known as the "great books movement," which, in turn, stood as proxy for one side of a rancorous university-wide (and eventually, nationwide) dispute about curricular and institutional priorities.[50]

Among that dispute's most visible performances was a debate between Adler and the physiologist Anton J. Carlson, a prominent and outspoken empiricist, which took place in Mandel Hall on February 9, 1934. Tickets were sold, Adler reports, and "departments bought boxes for faculty to view the event, as if it were going to be a bullfight that should be seen from a vantage point."[51] Adler's prepared remarks were met by a challenge from Carlson to defend comments on education, philosophy, and science excerpted from various Hutchins speeches. Adler complied, much to his own satisfaction. But the sociologist Edward Shils, who was in the audience that day and who regarded Adler as an intransigent bully, was unimpressed, describing the event as a "shabby performance" by both, "a vaudeville show, not an intellectual debate."[52]

Beyond intellectual malfeasance, Shils accused Adler of attaching, in his work at Chicago, a "theological penumbra" to Hutchins's proposals, worsened by an anti-Socratic, imperious disposition. He remembers hearing Adler for the first time in a seminar discussion on "Systematic Social Science," held in the Social Science Research Building in the 1930s, in "one of the more offensive academic performances I have seen." There, Shils finds Adler speaking in a "domineering tone" and "slapp[ing] the table repeatedly and resoundingly with his palm to add weight to his declarations."[53] Likewise for the great books seminar, about which students were so enthusiastic that Shils wanted to see for himself. Visiting a class, he encountered "as harsh a piece of academic browbeating of a student as I have ever witnessed, carried out by Mortimer Adler. Table slapping was as much a part of the technique of interpretation of texts as it had been part of the techniques of exposition of 'systematic social science.'"[54]

Though the Hutchins-Adler reforms suffered a mixed reception, one notable outcome of the table slapping was *The Great Books of the Western World*,

Mortimer Adler (center right) and Milton Mayer (center left) teaching the Great Books Seminar at the University of Chicago. As shown in "Worst Kind of Troublemaker," cover story on Robert M. Hutchins, *Time*, 21 November 1949. Photo: Myron Davis.

a fifty-four volume collection published by Encyclopaedia Britannica and the University of Chicago in 1952, edited by Adler and Hutchins. In 1947 Hutchins and William Benton, a former University of Chicago vice president who had become proprietor of Encyclopaedia Britannica in a joint venture with the university, established the Great Books Foundation for the purpose of promoting "great books" reading groups—extramural seminars—across the United States. These seminars were organized and conducted locally around tables in public libraries, schools, colleges, churches, and other public and private settings. Adler supplied a "Manual for Great Books Discussion Leaders" and traveled across the country to meet with library administrators to spread the word, and by 1953 a nationwide survey conducted by the foundation recorded a total of 1,176 such groups, with an average size of fourteen participants.[55] That is, by the time *The Great Books of the Western World* was published, the "great books" were more than a list; they were a system.[56]

The operating manual for this system is given by Adler and his coeditor William Gorman in their two-volume guide to the *Great Books* set, titled *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World*. Adler and Gorman begin their "syntopicon" by claiming the set is "something more than a collection of books"; rather it constitutes a "unity" or a "certain kind of whole that can and should be read as such."[57] In lieu of the five years typically required by reading groups to work through the full list, which ran from Homer to Freud, the *Syntopicon* provided a means of following short, thematic pathways through the set—a list of lists, bound together by indices, cross references, and keywords.

The definitive list of "great books" to be included in the collection had been compiled in 1943–1944 by an advisory board consisting of Adler, Hutchins, Erskine, Van Doren, and a number of other prominent exponents of the larger project. Using criteria formulated by Hutchins, the board unanimously agreed on thirty-two "essential" authors (most of whom were on Erskine's original Columbia list). They later expanded the list to sixty-five and, finally, to seventy-four, with a total of 443 individual works. Midway through this process, the board made another list, of "100 rubrics representing the great objects, ideas, arts, sciences, and questions presented, expounded, and discussed," in order to furnish further criteria for inclusion.[58] Whether as feedback extrapolated from "essential" works, or as a tautology, this list eventually settled in at 102 "great ideas," from "Angel" to "World," and became the organizing matrix for Adler's and Gorman's *Syntopicon*.

THE INDEXERS POSE WITH THE FILE OF GREAT IDEAS. AT SIDES STAND EDITORS ADLER (LEFT) AND GORMAN (RIGHT). EACH FILE DRAWER

The 102 Great Ideas
Scholars complete a monumental catalog

The exhausted-looking people grouped about the books and files above have just finished a monumental intellectual task. They have spent five years and nearly a million dollars making an index of every important idea of Western civilization. They have come up with the thesis that the basis of Western culture is the 102 great ideas displayed above.

According to them, almost every idea in the world appears in some form in 432 basic great books

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Behind the list of "great ideas" was an index of references to each in the collected books. This secondary list was compiled by two groups working in Chicago and Annapolis, home to St. John's College, which had been reorganized around the great books curriculum in 1937. As the group of indexers grew from ten to forty, it was consolidated in a former fraternity house on the Chicago campus (nicknamed "Index House"), along with seventy-five clerks.[59] Early on, a number of these indexers, few if any of whom possessed specialized knowledge, were tasked with breaking down classical Greek thought as a kind of test case, an exercise that yielded a list of 1,003 key terms. That list, in turn, became the main source for the list of 102 "great ideas." A *Life* magazine feature on the index explained the domestic arrangements by which all of this was achieved, centered on

> a staff of indexers whose job it was to read and reread two or three authors apiece until they know them perfectly. After a couple of years the indexers began to think like their authors and even to assume their names. From her window every morning Mrs. Freud would wave to Aristotle as he bicycled to work. Near her would sit St. Thomas Aquinas, who liked to work 36 hours at a stretch and relax by playing the horses. Kant was a man who had written his college thesis on "Misspellings in Old Southern Cookbooks."[60]

CONTAINS INDEX REFERENCES TO A GREAT IDEA. IN CENTER ARE THE WORKS OF THE 71 AUTHORS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE GREAT BOOKS

written by 71 men from Homer to Freud. Each idea has more than 30 subdivisions. Woman, not a main idea, is included in Family, Man and Love.

The Great Ideas index started five years ago, when Robert M. Hutchins, chancellor of the University of Chicago and director of the Encyclopaedia Britannica, decided the Encyclopedia would publish a 54-volume collection of the books. To go with the set to be published next year, he asked Dr. Mortimer J.

Adler of the university and William Gorman of the Encyclopaedia to prepare an index of ideas so the reader could look up any topic and trace it through the books. Adler and Gorman rented an old fraternity house on the Chicago campus, moved in a staff of indexers whose job it was to read and reread two or three authors apiece until they knew them perfectly. After a couple of years the indexers began to think like their authors and even to assume their

names. From her window every morning Mrs. Freud (seated, front left, above) would wave to Aristotle (front, fifth from left) as he bicycled to work. Near her would sit St. Thomas Aquinas (rear, fifth from left), who liked to work 30 hours at a stretch and relax by playing the horses. Kant (rear, extreme right) was a man who had written his college thesis on "Misspellings in Old Southern Cookbooks." For a sample of their treatment of a Great Idea, turn the page.

The fruits of their labors were recorded on over 150,000 index cards filed under the relevant ideas, in alphabetical order. From these, Adler wrote capsule introductions to each idea, a task he compared, again somewhat tautologically, to "writing 102 books."[61]

The Great Books of the Western World begins with a volume written by Hutchins entitled *The Great Conversation*, a title that should be taken literally. Although Hutchins strains to define "Western society" as progress toward "the Civilization of the Dialogue," we should read, in place of that society, the undergraduate honors seminar gathered around an oval table at the University of Chicago; or, for that matter, the conversation, in the Index House, between Mrs. Freud, Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kant. That conversation's subject matter and scope are tabulated in the *Syntopicon* itself, which comprises volumes 2 and 3 of the *Great Books* set. Its 102 chapters, each an alphabetically listed "great idea," are in turn broken into five parts: introduction, outline of topics, references, cross-references, and additional readings. The total adds up to approximately 3,000 subtopics, with 6 to 76 per idea, and 163,000 references, with 284 to 7,065 references per idea. These are typically followed by shorter lists of cross-references pointing to other entries, as well as a list of additional readings beyond those in the set. The two volumes conclude with an alphabetical inventory of 1,800 terms, an index to the

index by which the reader might locate specific subtopics without having to peruse the entire list.[62] In a majestically, manically reflexive gesture, this inventory is preceded by an exhaustive eighty-page appendix on "The Principles and Methods of Syntopical Construction."[63]

Dialectics 1

In the *Syntopicon* entry under "Dialectic," Adler rehearses, in the studied, didactic language of general education, his anti-Hegelian model of a balanced give-and-take among opposing propositions. Textual references to Hegel, listed with other authors, are restricted to loosely connected passages in *The Philosophy of Right* and *The Philosophy of History*, which together comprise volume 46 of *The Great Books of the Western World*. Just as table slapping had no place in Adler's pedagogical philosophy (though apparently it did in his actual pedagogy), the selections allowed him to underplay, in passing, the unruly asymmetries and hierarchies that haunt the Hegelian dialectic, in favor of a duly oppositional but comparatively placid, contemplative "dialogue" with oneself or with others.

The entry on "Dialectic" also lists Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* (or *Phenomenology of Spirit*) as additional reading. *Great Books* readers who sought out that work would have found there, among other things, a detailed exemplification of the fundamental asymmetry of Hegel's "struggle for recognition," in the dialectic of "lordship and bondage," commonly referred to as "master and slave." In place of the neat, balanced sequence of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis that Adler prefers to see in Hegel, recognition entails a life-and-death struggle between two "unequal and opposed" beings: "one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman."[64] The dialectic of the lecture and the seminar does not mirror this relation (far from it), or resolve master/slave into a progressive, synthetic movement. Instead, this particular dialectic doubles it up.

Dialectics 2

Seventeen years after Adler's Hegel took his modest place in *The Great Books of the Western World*, on the other side of the Atlantic and in the midst of student revolts, the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan explained to the audience of his "seminar" how the "discourse of the master," derived from Hegel's dialectic, transformed into the "discourse of the university." Lacan's audience sat in a lecture hall at the Parisian École de droit in the fall of 1969, watching and listening as Lacan drew symbols on the blackboard—*S1*, *S2*,

the barred *S*, (*objet petit*) *a*—in four different algebraic combinations, while complaining on one occasion that the red chalk with which he was provided might prove to be illegible.

The first of these combinations denoted the "master's discourse," which, according to Lacan, is none other than philosophy itself. By *discourse* Lacan meant not only enunciation but the social bond forged through signification: "Even before [philosophy] began talking about this alone, that is before it called it by its name—at least in Hegel it stands out, and is quite specially illustrated by him."[65] Acutely aware of the university setting in which he spoke, Lacan designated as "knowledge" the product of that discourse—not the knowledge of philosophers per se, but rather, on the one hand, signification in general, and on the other (and more specifically), the "know-how" (*savoir-faire*) of enslaved or otherwise oppressed persons. For as Hegel pointed out, the lord depends upon, rather than simply dominates, the bondsman, materially but also as consciousness, in a primary inequality, "one [the lord] being only *recognized*, the other [the bondsman] only *recognizing*." This relation undergoes dialectical reversal "only when each is for the other what the other is for it."[66] But the reversal can never be complete, insofar as the bondsman's relation to his work is sociotechnologically mediated by power. To the extent that "what he [the bondsman] does is really the action of the lord," the asymmetry holds, and "[t]he outcome is a recognition that is one-sided and unequal."[67] Hence, for Lacan, the principle of philosophy is one of "theft, abduction, stealing slavery of its knowledge, through the maneuvers of the master."[68]

In the algebraic formula that denotes the "discourse of the master," the master signifier S1 (God, the King, the Absolute) occupies the dominant position. Its illegitimate product, acquired at the expense of the slave but not without remainder or surplus enjoyment (*jouissance*), is knowledge, S2. During his fall 1969 lectures, to which he gave the title "Psychoanalysis Upside Down" (*La psychanalyse à l'envers*), Lacan explained and repeatedly drew three other formulae that derived from this "discourse of the master," two of which he readily named as the "discourse of the hysteric" and the "discourse of the analyst." About the fourth he was more cagey, withholding its name at the beginning and later referring to it only as "the one capped by the U" (just as the first was capped by an *M*) before naming it outright. In this formula, the dominant position is occupied by S2, knowledge, "not knowledge of everything [*savoir-tout*] . . . but all-knowing [*tout savoir*]. Understand this as being nothing other than knowledge, which in ordinary language is called the bureaucracy."[69] This bureaucratic or technocratic knowledge, occupying the position formerly held by the master, designates

what Lacan calls the "discourse of the university."

The product of the bureaucracy (which in Lacan's France as in Nietzsche's Germany we can take as a state bureaucracy) and, hence, of the university is the student, "object a," a "surplus value," but also a gap or void open to *jouissance*. Lacan explains this in a 1969 guest lecture at the experimental university at Vincennes, which had been established in response to student demands for reform the previous year. As he speaks, Lacan is interrupted by an audience member: "Who are you kidding? The University discourse is in the credit points." To which Lacan responds, "You are the product of the university, and you prove that you are the surplus value, even if only in this respect. . . . You come here to gain credit points for yourselves. You leave stamped 'credit points.'"[70]

Somewhat later in the same dialogue, if we can call it that (and, despite its many voices and interruptions, we must), another speaker, or perhaps the same one, asks,

> I wonder why this amphitheater is packed full with 800 people. It is true that you are a good clown, famous, and that you have come here to speak. A comrade also spoke for ten minutes to say that groups were unable to get themselves out of the university. And everyone, recognizing that there is nothing to be said, is speaking but saying nothing. So, if there is nothing to say, nothing to know, nothing to do, why are so many people here? And, Lacan, why do you stay?

To which Lacan eventually replies:

> If you had a bit of patience, and if you really wanted our impromptus to continue, I would tell you that, always, the revolutionary aspiration has only a single possible outcome—of ending up as a master's discourse. This is what experience has proved.
>
> What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a master. You will get one.[71]

Lacan had just pointed out that, for him, the paradigmatic society in which "it is precisely the university that occupies the driving seat" was the Soviet Union.[72] He could just as well have looked in the other direction, toward the United States, where, the following year, Senator J. William Fulbright would add "academic" to former President Dwight D. Eisenhower's earlier warnings about the "military-industrial complex."[73] But a detail in Hegel, not mentioned as such by Lacan in his lectures (nor, for that matter, by Adler in his books), suggests that this analysis has its limitations. "The lord relates himself mediately to the bondsman," writes Hegel, "through a being [*Seyn/Sein*] that is independent, for it is just this which holds the bondsman

in bondage; it is his chain [*Kette*] from which he could not break free in the struggle, thus proving himself to be dependent, to possess his independence in thinghood [*Dingheit*]."[74] The bondsman works on this being but does not master it, and so we are encouraged to understand the term to refer to the products of his coerced labor, or to labor in general. But Hegel, consciously or not, is more specific: the being is a chain, a piece of infrastructure, a bond.

For the master-slave dialectic to become a dialogue among equals, as Adler wished, this bond would have to become a bridge. That, in the end, was the function of the oval seminar table: a leveling device that would presumably put teachers and students on the same plane. But both epistemologically and historically, Adler's table slapping was symptomatic of the technical impossibility of such a leveling. Whereas, at the edge of the Chicago campus stood the chapel, the function of which was not so much to convert the resonant voice of God into the dry voice of Reason but to double these up into a new kind of fold wherein the speaker listened to his own voice reverberate around him even as others heard only reasoned argument. So, too, though in the obverse for the seminar, where pairs of professors—or, in the case of Chicago, an exiled professor of philosophy and the president of the university—listened to one another and to their students with "inner ears" finely tuned to pick up the slightest, most subtle signal in the ambient noise of the "great conversation," even as they knew that conversation to be, in its infrastructural reality, a self-authorizing, self-reproducing system of lists. This was the dialectic around which the "discourse of the university" was built.

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As the research university transmuted into a theater of technoscience in the decades following the Second World War, it may seem to have reiterated Nietzsche's speaking, listening, and writing machine, perhaps now without teachers, only knowledge systems, but still subservient to the power and interests of the state or of capital. But what of the humanistic intentions of the parallel system called the "great books" and associated ensembles? Is this just another instance of the bureaucratization of knowledge and of its commercialization as mass media? After all, more than just recording the voices of dead white men, these lists also *elicited* speech, in the form of an ongoing "great conversation," a sort of perpetual seminar that was meant to compensate, in its intimacy, for the abstraction of the lecture. And what of the political theology of the lecture hall, with its genealogical ties to the chapel? Are not the doubled-up acoustics of the lecture and the flat, oval architecture of the seminar table propped up by reading lists and indices one and the same

thing: a chain, or bond, that binds students and teachers alike to the imperious dialectic, a dialectic in which master and slave are replaced by sovereign knowledge and its products, including enlightened readers of "great books"?

For knowledge does not only entail the elimination of noise from the speaking system; it also entails the recapture of that noise as a signal, sent back to the speaker who is also a listener, in a feedback loop that, more often than not, has sought to restore the university's imagined "soul." Not by building chapels but by echoing "his master's voice," the voice of a charismatic, secular god that reverberates only in his own ears.[75] This activity finds its counterpart in a gathering of readers speaking, listening, and interrupting one another around a seminar table. Together, they constitute the discourse—and the dialectic—of the university. Not only as a machine for the production of instrumental knowledge, in both its useful and its exploitative aspects, or for the production of critical knowledge, but as a machine for producing soulful humans. These humans are ruthless, moralizing agents, not of reason or unreason but of the performative chain or bond itself. In this sense we can describe the research university as a media system, the architecture of which forms the equipment through which their voices can still be heard.

Notes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, fifth lecture, delivered 23 March 1872, trans. J.M. Kennedy, vol. 3 of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy (Edinburgh: T.N. Foulis, 1920), 126. Translation modified.

2. Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, 126.

3. On the history of the Prussian (or Hanoverian-Prussian) system and the pedagogical and research practices specific to it, see William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Clark's comments on Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* regarding the interplay of Apollonian and Dionysian knowledge in relation to the production and maintenance of a charismatic academic "voice" are highly suggestive. See ch. 11, "Academic Voices and the Ghost in the Machine," 398–432. On the international dissemination of the Prussian model, see ch. 12, "The Research University and Beyond," 435–76.

4. For an overview, including American orientation toward German models, see Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), esp. ch. 3; and Roger L. Geiger, *To Advance Knowledge: The Growth of American Research Universities 1900–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), esp. ch. 1. See also, Roger L. Geiger, *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), esp. ch. 8. John R. Thelin emphasizes university ties to industry in *A History of Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), ch. 4.

5. At first glance, by the late nineteenth century American colleges and universities may seem to have turned the corner of secularization, having integrated into their curricula new knowledge paradigms opened up by the natural and social sciences and, in particular, by Darwinism. But the period also saw a spate of campus chapel building that even included the secular (or, at least, deist) University of Virginia, founded on a modified Kantian model by Thomas Jefferson in 1819, which opened its nondenominational chapel in 1889, just opposite a slightly older natural history museum dating to 1877, immediately beyond the Jeffersonian Rotunda. To make sense of such apparent contradictions, a more complex understanding of the interpenetration of secular and religious cultural techniques is therefore in order.

6. Richard J. Storr, *Harper's University: The Beginnings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 13–17.

7. For more on the mutual imbrication of Enlightenment reason and a resonant, reverberant aurality, see Veit Erlmann, *Reason and Resonance: A History of Modern Aurality* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), esp. chs. 5, 8.

8. Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 13.

9. Schmidt, 134. Schmidt quotes from Frederik Poulsen, "Talking, Weeping, and Bleeding Statues," *Acta Archaeologica* 16 (1945): 178–95. On the mechanico-acoustic "oracles of reason," see Schmidt, ch. 3.

10. This circuit is related to Friedrich A. Kittler's description of the university as a "writing-down system" (*Aufschreibesystem*) or "discourse network." See Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks: 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer with Chris Cullens (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), esp. 368. See also Friedrich A. Kittler, "Universities: Wet, Hard, Soft,

and Harder," *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 1 (Autumn 2004): 244–255.

11. William Rainey Harper, *Religion and the Higher Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1904), 107.

12. See, in particular, Storr, *Harper's University*, ch. 4.

13. *The President's Report, University of Chicago, July 1892–July 1902* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903), 536.

14. Thomas Wakefield Goodspeed, *A History of the University of Chicago, Founded by John D. Rockefeller: The First Quarter-Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), 450.

15. Goodspeed, 347.

16. Goodspeed, 348.

17. Goodspeed, 348.

18. Jean F. Block, *The Uses of Gothic: Planning and Building the Campus of the University of Chicago, 1892–1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 1983), 152.

19. John D. Rockefeller to the President and Trustees of the University of Chicago, 13 December 1910, quoted in "The University of Chicago Statement of the Chapel Fund," 9 February 1924, in University of Chicago, Department of Buildings and Grounds, Records, box 26, folder 14, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. Hereinafter referred to as University of Chicago Department of Buildings and Grounds Records.

20. George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 265.

21. Marsden, 246.

22. Based on a maximum audience of 1,600 persons, Watson and White's preliminary estimate showed that the interior would require 9,000 square feet of acoustic tile and 20,000 square feet of Akoustalith plaster. F.R. Watson to L.R. Flook, 3 July 1926, in University of Chicago Department of Buildings and Grounds Records, box 27, folder 7.

23. The Guastavino Company proposed replacing their proprietary Rumford acoustic ceiling tile with cast Akoustalith plaster due to the unreliable color variations in the clay used in manufacturing the tile. O.H. Murray to L.R. Flook, 30 July 1926, in University of Chicago Department of Buildings and Grounds Records, box 27, folder 7.

24. Emily Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), esp. 70–74 on the ties between Sabine, Goodhue, and Guastavino.

25. "The sound of the speaker's voice proceeds outward in all directions, with only a small part of it going directly to the audience and the reflected sound, which usually reinforces the direct sound, is largely diffused and broken up by the distant, irregular surfaces." F.R. Watson to L.R. Flook, 4 August 1926, in University of Chicago Department of Buildings and Grounds Records, box 27, folder 7.

26. L.R. Flook to Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue Associates, 20 August 1926, in University of Chicago Department of Buildings and Grounds Records, box 27, folder 7. Shortly thereafter Flook again wrote to the Goodhue office on behalf of the building committee to indicate its opposition to replacing the original Rumford tile with cast Akoustolith, which they felt to be an inferior product. A representative of the Guastavino Company replied, on Goodhue office letterhead, affirming the permanence of the cast Akoustolith tile and its advantages in regard to coloration. R. Guastavino Company to L.R. Flook, 26 August 1926, in University of Chicago

Department of Buildings and Grounds Records, box 27, folder 7.

27. F.R. Watson to L.R. Flook, 22 October 1928, in University of Chicago Department of Buildings and Grounds Records, box 27, folder 7; and L.R. Flook to Rev. Clement Noenig, 7 January 1929, in University of Chicago Department of Buildings and Grounds Records, box 27, folder 7.

28. Francis Mayers to University of Chicago, 22 September 1926, in University of Chicago Department of Buildings and Grounds Records, box 27, folder 7.

29. F.R. Watson, "Ideal Auditorium Acoustics," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, July 1928, 9–10. Watson delivered this address to the American Institute of Architects annual convention in May 1928.

30. Watson to Flook, 22 October 1928.

31. Watson lists the "Conditions for Perfect Acoustics" in *Acoustics of Buildings*, 11–12. Thompson notes Watson's tendency, in the mid-1920s, "to conceptualize the concert hall as a combination of two different rooms, one for performers and another for auditors." She writes that, in Watson's ideal, the stage would remain "'live' or reflective" while the audience is wrapped in what amounts to a "reverberation-muffling blanket." She goes on to observe that "[t]he result was a concert hall that provided a sound similar to that beginning to be heard via electroacoustic technologies in the home," thus reinforcing "the physical separation of music producers from consumers." Thompson, 251–52. Despite noticing this key difference, Thompson recapitulates the commonplace narrative that construes modernity as a progressive march toward alienation and reification—a view that, when seen from the standpoint of the speaker or performer, is contravened by the very same evidence she cites.

32. Thompson, 3.

33. In later work, Watson reinforced the doubled-up character of "ideal auditorium acoustics." In revised version of his "Ideal Auditorium Acoustics," Watson observed, "Some years ago, on reading a number of published accounts of various investigations on acoustics and comparing the results, the author was led to two conclusions: first, that practically all the acoustic defects in auditoriums are due to reflected sound; and second, that speakers and musicians are aided by nearby reflecting surfaces." Insisting that this counterintuitive arrangement is not contradictory, Watson adds that, "particularly when it is equipped with a stage that has reflecting surfaces," the outdoor theater is a model. He goes on to repeat his earlier conclusion, that "[f]rom this conception, to obtain ideal acoustic conditions in an indoor auditorium, it would be necessary to follow two rules:

1. Provide a stage with suitable reflecting surfaces so that performers can 'hear themselves.'
2. Design the auditorium or listening so that the reflected sound will be reduced to be compatible with outdoor conditions."

F.R. Watson, *Acoustics of Buildings, Including Acoustics of Auditoriums and Soundproof Rooms*, 3rd ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1941), 50. Although many of the examples Watson adduced to demonstrate the applicability of this principle refer to musical or theatrical performance, the premise of the overall thesis allows us to safely assume its applicability to churches or lecture halls. Consistent with this is Watson's further hypothesis, based on more recent experiments by others, that comparable results may be achieved electroacoustically: "Since the foregoing account was written there has appeared an account of experiments

for the improvement of stage conditions for performers. The reflection of sound to the performers is accomplished by a loud-speaker arrangement, by which the performer's voice is picked up by a microphone and the sound is returned to him by a loud speaker. Performers are very enthusiastic about the device, stating that it gives them the confidence that is lacking with the usual stage arrangements" (63). The account Watson refers to is Harold Burris-Meyer, "The Control of Acoustic Conditions on the Concert Stage," *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 12 (January 1941): 335–37.

34. Clark, 141–82. On the persistence of the disputational model, see in particular 172–79. Clark asks, "In incorporating elements of the private society, did these seminars cross the divide from formal disputation and lecture to something approaching enlightened conversation? Were they egalitarian and effervescent places?" And he responds that "thousands of pages of documentation" have failed to answer these questions definitively (176). He goes on to show the continued importance, however, of formal practices. On genealogical ties between the history seminar and the scientific laboratory, as well as on these as sites for the performance of normative gender roles, see Bonnie G. Smith, "Gender and the Practices of Scientific History: The Seminar and Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (October 1995): 1150–76.

35. Clark, 181.

36. Mary Ann Dzuback, *Robert M. Hutchins: Portrait of an Educator* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 82.

37. Senior among these figures were James R. Tufts and George Herbert Mead. The coming unrest was foreshadowed, perhaps, by the fact that Adler's initial salary exceeded all but Tufts's by a significant margin, indicating a certain tension between departmental and presidential prerogatives. Dzuback, 95.

38. John Erskine, *The Memory of Certain Persons* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1947), 343.

39. Erskine, *The Memory of Certain Persons*, 311–37.

40. Undated letter from an unnamed author to Dean Frederick P. Keppel, in Erskine, *My Life as a Teacher* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1948), 168. At Columbia, the list of books was initially provisional and was subject to monthly modification in consultation with faculty colleagues.

41. Mortimer J. Adler, *Philosopher at Large: An Intellectual Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1977), 55. Adler's title for the chapter in which this detail appears is "Book Lists without End."

42. Although he never formally graduated from Columbia (having failed to complete the physical education requirement), in 1923 Adler entered graduate school there without a diploma, earning his Ph.D. in 1929. At the same time (1923) he became a preceptor in the general honors course with Mark Van Doren.

43. Adler, *Philosopher at Large*, 57.

44. Adler, *Philosopher at Large*, 58.

45. Adler, *Philosopher at Large*, 68. Already at Columbia, Adler had immersed himself in resolving the seemingly interminable disputes over the legitimacy of Erskine's original list, which actually numbered fifty-two authors and more than a hundred works. In 1925 Adler expanded the list to one hundred seventy-six. By 1927, balloting and debate among faculty had reduced it to seventy-six. This was basically the list around which Adler and Hutchins

built the "great books" course at the University of Chicago when they began teaching an undergraduate honors seminar together in 1930.

46. A few years prior, having been "excommunicated" from Columbia's philosophy department and moved over to psychology, Adler presented a paper at a philosophy conference titled "God and the Psychologists." The paper, according to Adler, opposed the "man-centered thinker" of pragmatist philosophy—the model for which, John Dewey, sat in the audience—to the "God-centered thinker," or metaphysician, in the person of George Santayana (or, more tendentiously, Adler himself). The "psychologists" of his title were principally the new behaviorists, led by John B. Watson, who had studied under Dewey. As Adler read his paper, it seems, Dewey became visibly annoyed, "pounded the arms of his chair, stood up, and walked out of the room muttering that he did not intend to sit around listening to someone tell him how to think about God." Adler, *Philosopher at Large*, 49. This was the same John Dewey whose name was virtually synonymous with the dominant philosophical and social-scientific orientation at the University of Chicago when Hutchins, the son of a Presbyterian minister, arrived, followed by Adler, a Jewish devotee of Aquinas.

47. Mortimer J. Adler, *Dialectic* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), 10–11. Adler acknowledges his antipathy to Hegel in *Philosopher at Large*, 156.

48. Dzuback, 101–2.

49. Adler, *Philosopher at Large*, 139–40.

50. In his 1930 New Plan, which designated the undergraduate college as custodian of general education, Hutchins proposed reorganizing the entire university into four separate divisions—humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, and biological sciences—with the College separated out as a fifth, and each with its own faculty. The plan, which was supported by key members of the senior faculty, was accepted in short order by the trustees. In that sense, the controversy that defined the Hutchins years at Chicago was an infrastructural rather than a strictly administrative contest, the battle lines of which were far less clear, and the public organization of which as a doubled-up, two-sided dispute was already an indication of broader and more-encompassing changes that a list of competing ideologies fails to capture. See Dzuback, 109–12. Hutchins's educational philosophy at the time is documented in Robert Maynard Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936).

51. Adler, *Philosopher at Large*, 164.

52. Edward Shils, "Robert Maynard Hutchins," *American Scholar* 59, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 216.

53. Shils, 214–15. Adler later acknowledged his embarrassment at "brashness of my performance" in the seminar, in which "I lectured my elders, allowing no time for questions or discussion." Adler, *Philosopher at Large*, 153.

54. Shils, "Robert Maynard Hutchins," 217.

55. *Great Books under Discussion: A Report on the Program in 1953* (Chicago: The Great Books Foundation, 1954).

56. The 1953 report contains 129 tables based on a questionnaire returned by 4,791 participants, recording extensive data on the program, from the gender, ages, and occupations of participants, to meeting arrangements, "Patterns of Leadership," and "Leader Training," to the books themselves. The questionnaire tabulates the books in terms of the reactions from readers: "too long," "too brief for effective discussion," with rankings by genre according to degrees of difficulty and "enjoyment." *Great Books under Discussion*, 105.

57. Mortimer J. Adler, preface to Mortimer J. Adler and William Gorman, *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World, Volume I*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 2, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), xi.

58. Tim Lacy, *The Dream of a Democratic Culture: Mortimer J. Adler and the Great Books Idea* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 49–51.

59. Lacy, 51.

60. "The 102 Great Ideas: Scholars Complete a Monumental Catalog," *Life* #24, no. 4 (26 January 1948): 92.

61. Lacy, 52; and Adler, *Philosopher at Large*, 248–50.

62. Adler, preface to *The Great Ideas*, xiii–xxi. This, the second part of the preface, is titled "The Structure of the Syntopicon."

63. "The Principles and Methods of Syntopical Construction," in Mortimer J. Adler and William Gorman, *The Great Ideas: A Syntopicon of Great Books of the Western World, Volume II*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 3, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), 1219–99.

64. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 115. On the historicity of this relation, see Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009); and Andrew Cole, "What Hegel's Master/Slave Dialectic Really Means," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 577–610. Although Cole makes a persuasive case for locating Hegel's model in feudalism, and hence for conceiving the dialectic as one of "lordship" and "bondage," I retain the terms *master* and *slave*, used influentially by Alexandre Kojève, to point to the larger and more recent discourse.

65. Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007), 20.

66. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 112–13.

67. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 116.

68. Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 21.

69. Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 31.

70. Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 201.

71. Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 207.

72. Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 206.

73. J. William Fulbright, "The War and Its Effects: The Military-Industrial-Academic Complex," in Herbert I. Schiller, ed., *Super-State: Readings in the Military-Industrial Complex* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1970).

74. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 115. The German original is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *System der Wissenschaft. Erster Theil: Die Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bamberg: Joseph Anton Goebhardt, 1807), 122; available at http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/hegel_phaenomenologie_1807.

75. *His Master's Voice* is the title of a painting made by Francis Barraud in 1898. It shows a dog named Nipper listening intently to his dead master's voice (that of Barraud's brother) on an Edison-Bell cylinder phonograph. In 1899, Barraud modified the painting to show a Berliner disc gramophone in place of the phonograph. In 1900 the painting became the trademark of the Gramophone Company and, shortly thereafter in the United States, the Victor Talking

Machine Company. Media theory has had much to say about Nipper. See, for example, Theodor W. Adorno, "The Curves of the Needle," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, in *Essays on Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 274; Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 69; John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 161–63; and Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 301–7. "His Master's Voice" is also the title of a 1968 work of science fiction by the Polish writer Stanisław Lem, which sardonically follows the technocratic discourse of the university beyond the campus in a latter-day Manhattan Project—code name: His Master's Voice—devoted to decrypting a possible message received from intelligent beings elsewhere in the universe. Of the message, Lem writes, "It was conceived as a voice whose echo would return—once it was heard and understood." Stanisław Lem, *His Master's Voice*, trans. Michael Kandel (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1983), 195.