

nor a comprehensive work. Themes and anecdotes are repeated throughout, a characteristic that rather prevents its being read like any other book. But this is apparently in accordance with Nisbet's wishes: inasmuch as it was written to please the author, so it should be read for the sheer pleasure of a learned man's illuminating company. *Prejudices* was designed for those who like to skim, to jump from one subject to whatever else catches their fancy, where they may be annoyed or amused, but always edified. It is the rare book these days that can make such a claim.

Reviewed by WILLIAM MCGURN

'Rachel Weeping (New York, 1982).

Troubles and Opportunities in Academe

The University and the Public Interest,
by A. Bartlett Giamatti, *New York:*
Atheneum, 1981. xii + 184 pp. \$12.95.

A. BARTLETT GIAMATTI became president of Yale University in 1977, a time when institutions of higher education were in deep troubles that promised to become even more oppressive in the decade to come. In addition to problems imposed by inflation, colleges and universities feel a special impact of demographic patterns and cultural changes that affect student generations. With falling enrollments, faculties become over-tenured, blocking the recruitment and retention of young teachers. A disastrous job market for Ph.D.'s is driving many of the most talented and promising graduate students out of the academic profession. College students reflect declining

standards of their earlier education in the essential disciplines of language and mathematics, and the traditional liberal studies suffer most from the growing trend towards practical and "vocational" studies.

These troubling matters, along with an affirmation of positive university values, are discussed by President Giamatti in this collection of thirteen separate essays, mostly addresses given on Yale University occasions. The preface admits that the book presents "no new legislative proposals, no policy initiatives," but suggests that a unity may be found in a "set of private convictions" about the role of education in promoting the public good.

In spite of some limitations imposed by official occasions and the disclaimer of the preface, the reader will discern some policy implications in these well-informed and frequently pungent observations on academic affairs. Although the author frankly describes difficulties and dangers, he warns against the seductions of an "apocalyptic style," which may offer "fatigue masquerading as philosophy" to young people in these years approaching the end of a millennium as well as a century.

Two early essays reflect views of the professor of Renaissance literature who was to become university president. "Sentimentality," written in 1975, observes that students entering college at that time were victims of the anti-structures of the "sentimental 1960's." Of all the institutions attacked, "the one that suffered most was the institution of language itself." Rebellion against the discipline of language can be illustrated by an inflammatory speech of Abbie Hoffman at a Yale campus gathering, but it is more alarming that a high official of the National Council of Teachers of English could deride the notion of teaching "basic skills," and in effect would "rather have students avoid meaning and grope for feeling." As a result of such doctrines "millions of school children . . . have been lied to." This sentimentality, "this deep distrust of the restrictions of language . . . is at the heart of why young people today cannot write."

"On Behalf of the Humanities," a paper delivered before fellow professors of the Modern Language Association in 1977, faces the unhappy and by that time obvious fact that the humanities are especially vulnerable before "the assaults of inflation, the shrinking number of students, the devastated job market, and particularly the growing vocationalism of the young." In blunt words Giamatti warns his colleagues that it will not be enough to recite the conventional defense because under pressure the humanists themselves "did not really seem to believe it." In the 1960s it was in many places "not the hard scientists or the social scientists, but the humanists, or at least those who taught in humanities departments, who wrote the guidelines that displaced the requirements for a B.A., who eloquently undermined the writing and the foreign language requirements, who instituted the grading reforms." They displaced themselves, and "in seeming to will themselves to the periphery, humanists made themselves perilously vulnerable."

Although some topics, like the reaffirmation of Ivy Agreement principles in athletics, have a limited reference to the writer's own university, recurring comments on financial support are widely applicable. A survey of the distinguished—and very expensive—scientific research carried on at Yale admits that there must be federal support for such programs. "There is no point in lamenting that this is so, and that a bygone day, before the Second World War, is not with us now." But conceding the obligation to be accountable in appropriate ways, Giamatti depicts the serious damage done by excessive government requirements. "Federal regulation can often be disruptive, or diversionary of resources and energy, or at times blatantly intrusive into the heart of the academic enterprise." The underlying problem is the failure of government to understand the collegial nature of the University's procedures. Accustomed to dealing with itself or with industrial corporations, it fails to see that "the University's structure is a hierarchy unlike any other." Universities cannot "readily shift workers from one part

of the plant to another. They do not hire and fire their employees as other institutions do."

If excessive and damaging federal control is to be resisted, private universities, if they are to survive, must look for substantially increased support from the corporate private sector, and "if the corporate part of America is really interested in a free market—of ideas—then it ought to act on its convictions." Although his own experience is that "the private sector tends to understand and respect the norms and values of a private university far better than the federal government," Giamatti admits that there has been a "ballet of distrust and defensiveness between universities and the corporate world." Some corporate leaders, like government officials, have failed to understand the freedoms essential in the University. Perhaps with an unspoken allusion to some proposals that private universities should appoint professors more favorable to their sources of support, he warns that "the danger we have seen in various forms of federal intrusion cannot be exchanged for other kinds of intrusion from the private corporate sector."

Turning to more controversial trends in the larger society, a baccalaureate address of 1981 traces and deplores historical forces that have brought about a disconnection of ideas from power in America. The result has been that "many thoughtful citizens disdain politics and politicians," and this society has failed to develop a sound professionalism in public life. Emerson's exaltation of "self-reliance and original action" is seen as an immature and still influential expression of a dangerous spirit. To him "we owe that spirit of Puritan America that has survived to this day, the smug abstract moralism that is distrustful of any accommodation, that is always certain of its righteousness." A current manifestation of such political immaturity is "an extraordinary savagery of spirit" to be seen in "increasing and deeply dangerous polarization of the races, the pustular eruptions of sexism, racism and of anti-Semitism." To exorcise that evil "we

must reject a spirit that instinctively turns to boycott, instead of tough reasoned debate to express its disagreement. We must publicly reject the movement that once again tries to ban books in libraries. . . . Those who arrogantly assert that their morality is in the majority must not expect those who do not believe it to stand mute."

A repudiation of the Moral Majority is not unexpected in a liberal and sophisticated academic community, but the indignation against a wide range of social and political ills is too narrowly directed here towards a single movement. Divisive prejudices or the turning to boycott and the use of political pressure to achieve what are considered good moral or social purposes are not limited to the religious far right. There is surely an over-simplification and some historical injustice in associating all these dispositions with the ideas of Emerson and a surviving "spirit of Puritan America." The vehemence of this condemnation of "neo-Puritan" attitudes has not left a place for recognition that conservative concerns for traditional and sometimes unfashionable values need not be identified with extremist prejudices and abuses of the political process.

The emphasis on a "plurality of values" throughout these essays includes a "plurality of institutions." Since private universities want to be "responsive to their own traditions," as well as to the larger society, it is disappointing that so little is said specifically of what such differentiating traditions are, and how they can be better served in such institutions than elsewhere. Independence from governmental and other intrusion, high academic standards, freedom of inquiry, rational discourse and civility are the common ideals of all major universities. Apart from different sources of major financial support and Ivy reservations about athletic programs, these acute observations on the troubles and opportunities of higher education say little that would not be equally applicable at Berkeley or Ann Arbor.

Reviewed by CHARLES D. MURPHY