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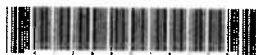
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THE UNIVERSITY  
AND THE CITY

*From Medieval Origins  
to the Present*

*Edited by*

Thomas Bender

New York      Oxford  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

*mel 2264315*

## 12

## The University, the City, and the World: Chicago and the University of Chicago

*Edward Shils*

Universities, for the most part, transmit truths which they themselves have not discovered. Those which they discover are not for their own contemplation exclusively; they have to be diffused to wider, even worldwide, intellectual communities. What is essential in a university—knowledge—must be drawn from and offered to students, teachers, and investigators in other parts of the world. Intellectually, no university can be wholly self-contained.

Every institution exists in an ecological setting. No institution or any part of an institution is free from the necessity of interaction with its immediate locality. Its physical existence is located in a particular place; its members live in particular places; they often live near each other; their survival as physiological organisms depends on local institutions to supply food, maintain lines of transportation, and ensure public order—all of these occur within places of relatively narrow radius.

No modern university has ever lived entirely from the sale of its services. Universities have received subsidies from the church, the state, and private philanthropists as individuals and as foundations. The fees paid by their students for tuition have only in very few cases come close to covering the costs of conducting a university. The patrons might be mainly local or widely dispersed.

Universities might offer instruction primarily to local residents; they might offer instruction to local residents, outside regular academic courses of study. They might open their libraries and gymnasiums and playing fields to local residents; offer medical, legal, and social services to local residents; perform research for and give advice to local industries and local governmental bodies. Their teachers might be active in local political and civic affairs.

It would be very misleading to think about universities as local institutions in the way in which a municipal government or a civic association is a local

institution. It is imperative that they attend to local affairs, but they would not amount to much as universities if they attended largely to them. Universities are intellectual institutions, and intellectual activities have their objects everywhere in the world and beyond the world of time and space. A university which taught only about local phenomena, which did research only on local phenomena, and which did not transcend the vague but real boundaries of locality would not be a respectable university.

Any single university is a local intellectual community—even if a very loosely articulated one—within a local community which is also a municipal community. A university is also a local intellectual community within an intellectual community made up of many universities, each of which is also a local institution and each of which is at some distance from the others. Within each university and among universities there are also subcommunities made up of scientists and scholars, each of whom “belongs,” more or less wittingly, to one or several of those subcommunities of disciplines and intellectual interests. These are communities and subcommunities of common problems, common bodies of knowledge, common rules of observation, interpretation, and assessment and also a common collective consciousness of vague boundaries, both concentric and overlapping. These latter intellectual communities of substance and method are more far-flung than those of the local communities, both the local municipal community and the local intellectual community.

The truths of science and scholarship are put forward by their possessors and discoverers with aspirations to universal validity. Only a very small part of what is studied, taught, and investigated in a university refers to the locality, and when it does it refers to it “in the categories of eternity,” as an instance of a more general class of phenomena which exist beyond the local community.

There are numerous lines of dependence between locality and university which are so important for both; these local connections do not belie or weaken the aspiration and the sense of obligation of a university to enunciate truths of universal validity and to illuminate phenomena which are far outside the boundaries of the local community. Locality and universality are not antithetical. The aspiration of a university toward universality and its partial attainment owes much to locality, and it does so in many ways. A local society can affect a university positively and negatively. It can affect not only the ecological conditions in which a university works but also its internal life for good and for ill. The University of Chicago is an interesting instance of how a local society has affected the growth of a university, the claim of which to respect in the world of learning and in the world at large rests in its fruitful participation in the world intellectual community. No less interesting but even more defiant to analysis is the contribution which the University of Chicago has made to the city of Chicago.

Put in other words, what has the University of Chicago got from its existence in Chicago, and what has Chicago got from having the university in its midst?

I will try to answer these questions very simply and preliminarily. From the society of Chicago the University of Chicago has received financial support. It has received not only financial support but moral support as well. It has received the deference of the lay public which has been proud to count the University of Chicago as belonging to it. It has received the stimulation of living in the midst of a harsh, animated, and demanding environment. What Chicago has received from the university is an even more difficult problem. More important than anything else, Chicago has benefited by the "possession" of a serious university. A city without an important university is an incomplete city. Chicago has benefited by the pride, intermittently felt by its inhabitants, in an institution which bears its name and is famous in the world. It has gained many particular services. It has had the collaboration of teachers of the university in activities which at least some parts of Chicago society have thought to be desirable.

"The University of Chicago" was originally the name given in the charter issued by the state of Illinois in 1857 to an institution founded on the initiative of local businessmen, Stephen A. Douglas, and a Baptist clergyman. It ceased its activities in 1886. There was also a Baptist Union Theological Seminary which had been chartered by the state of Illinois in 1865. Both had a wider than local patronage. Both also had severe financial difficulties, but the seminary, unlike the university, survived. There was a period of about half a decade in which there was no institution which was called the University of Chicago, although the charter which provided for the use of that name remained legally valid. There was, however, a desire on the part of leading Baptists, especially but not only in the Midwest, that the work of training Baptist ministers should be taken up again in the Midwest and that it should be done in the setting of a university of the highest intellectual standard. Frederick T. Gates, a former Baptist clergyman in Minneapolis, who later became adviser to John D. Rockefeller, Sr., on his philanthropic activities, was strongly of the opinion that such an institution should be established. It was probably in response to the growth of biblical studies, primarily in Germany in the nineteenth century, that American Baptists thought that a conventional training in a specialized traditional theological college was insufficient if the Baptist denomination was to hold its own in the modern world. Modern learning enjoyed among pious laymen such prestige that a denomination whose clergy was without it would be deemed to have forfeited its right to respect in the world.

The residual trustees of the old University of Chicago, who were legally the custodians of the charter, concurred to the establishment of the new University of Chicago. This happened only after long preparation by Thomas W. Goodspeed and Gates in discussions with local notables and especially in discussions with Rockefeller. From the very beginning of the history of the first University of Chicago, local businessmen and local clergymen had been very active. The businessmen were usually members of the Baptist denomination. (Stephen Douglas, who drafted the first charter, stipulated in it that all

the trustees of the old university must be Baptists. This was carried over to the new University of Chicago, although it was emphasized that such restrictions must not apply to the appointment of teachers and the admission of students.) No governmental authority, encouragement, or financial support whatsoever was sought—neither federal, state, nor municipal—and no advisers from existing universities were appointed or consulted. Action was initiated and taken on the basis that there was a necessity for an outstanding university under Baptist sponsorship in the Midwest; it was to be a university which, among other things, would train Baptist clergymen in the setting of the entire cosmos of knowledge being explored by modern universities. (The Baptist Union Theological Seminary became the school of divinity of the University of Chicago in 1892.)

Why it had to be a university, teaching and investigating over the whole range of subjects appropriate to a university, is a question that is not easy to answer in any definitive manner. It is plausible to assert that these businessmen, lawyers, physicians, publishers, and clergymen believed that the local and the religious communities of which they were members would, in a fundamental, almost metaphysical sense, be incomplete if each did not have a modern university. For persons with civic spirit in modern societies a university appears to be indispensable for all sorts of practical and impractical reasons. Most of the practical reasons could be satisfied by technical colleges and professional schools. But a university is different from these. It can, of course, perform practical services and train the persons who can perform such services, but there is something in it which is regarded by those who seek to promote it as of intrinsic value. A city without a university is to some extent stunted or incomplete.

Once the decision was made to restart the University of Chicago, the next task was to find a person to become the head of the institution. The first choice from the very beginning was William Rainey Harper, who had been teaching Hebrew, Assyrian, Arabic, Aramaic, and Syriac at Yale since 1886 but had formerly taught at the Baptist Union Theological Seminary in Morgan Park and had been invited, unsuccessfully, to accept the presidency of the failing old University of Chicago. He was a biblical scholar; he was abreast of German scholarship; he was known for his high intellectual qualities, his limitless energy, his idealistic ambition, and his piety.

When Harper was invited to become the president of the new University of Chicago, he had before him the examples of Johns Hopkins University and Clark University, both of which had been inspired by the achievements of the German universities of the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century; later he also had his own observations of German universities of the last decade of the century. Once he was appointed to the presidency but before the university opened for its first classes, Harper went to Germany to gain a more intimate knowledge of German universities and to purchase books for the library.

Harper did not think only of divinity. He thought of the whole range of humanistic, social science, and natural scientific subjects which were required

if an institution of higher education were to be a university in the sense that a German university was a university.

Despite his seven years as a professor at the Baptist Union Theological Seminary, Harper had little contact with the life of Chicago; he knew little of its businessmen. Born in Ohio and educated in Michigan, he was, however, free from eastern prejudice and snobbery about businessmen or about a city already renowned for its industrial and commercial enterprise and located at a nodal point in the national system of transportation.

Harper knew that a university, if it was to do serious work in scholarship, had to have a library. Except for the Newberry Library, which had been founded only a few years earlier, there was no scholarly library in Chicago on which the scholars of the university could draw. Harper was determined to establish such a library, being rightly convinced that he could not persuade serious scholars to join the University of Chicago if there were no library there. The Newberry library was the only fairly large scholarly collection in Chicago, but it was about ten miles from the university and could not be used regularly without great inconvenience. Harper therefore purchased the entire stock of Calvary, a great Berlin dealer in second-hand and antiquarian academic books. The number of books was variously estimated at from one hundred thousand to two hundred and fifty thousand. (In the end only sixty thousand books and forty thousand dissertations have been definitively confirmed as having come from Calvary.) Under Harper, within a few years the University of Chicago library contained a quarter of a million books.

The acquisition of this great collection, which immediately placed the University of Chicago library among the leading scholarly libraries of the country, was achieved against the obstacle that the meager funds available for the university—six hundred thousand dollars provided by Rockefeller and four hundred thousand dollars gathered from local businessmen—could not be used for such a purchase. Yet it was the businessmen of Chicago who banded together behind the intrepid Harper. The success of Harper's daring enterprise was made possible only through his desperate enlistment of the support of a group of businessmen of Chicago. As was to be the case over the rest of his career as president of the university, Harper had moved to the realization of his plans before there was money to pay for them. He did so with a justified confidence that his wealthy patrons would understand what he was trying to do. Practically none of his local patrons or Rockefeller had any experience of a university of the sort Harper wished to create, but they had a dim notion of it. Of course, they had faith in Harper's integrity, but they probably also knew that his ideal was a good one. Twice Rockefeller's generosity provided a million dollars beyond his original gift. Without those gifts, the University of Chicago could not have been established. Those gifts, however grand they were according to the wealth and standards of that time, were insufficient. Even the third gift of one million dollars from Rockefeller was not enough without the readiness of businessmen in Chicago to contribute substantially to the wealth and income of the university.

The generosity of Martin Ryerson, Helen Culver, Mrs. Emmons Blaine,

William B. Ogden, Charles Yerkes, Julius Rosenwald, Elizabeth Kelley, Marshall Field, Mrs. Charles Hitchcock, Mrs. Frederick Haskell, Leon Mandel, Charles Hutchinson, and many others made a very great difference to the University of Chicago:

The benefactors of the University became in very many instances its fast friends and were always ready when the need arose to repeat their gifts, so that their names appear as contributors on the books twice ten times, and in some cases thirty times more.<sup>1</sup>

They were joined in subsequent generations by the Regenstein and the Pritzker families, the Goldblatts, Bernard Mitchell, and many others. That relationship between the University of Chicago and the wealthy businessmen of the city continued approximately on the same pattern until well after World War II when Chicago lost its industrial preeminence in the country to the Far West, the Southwest, and to some extent to New England. Nevertheless, the gifts by no means ceased even after the economic decline of Chicago became quite marked.

Chicago businessmen endowed many professorial chairs at the University of Chicago, in subjects which promised no pecuniary benefits to their patrons or even to the branches of industry and commerce in which they had made their fortunes. From the beginning they provided funds to erect buildings. Harper Memorial Library was built mainly from gifts by Rockefeller and local businessmen; the Regenstein Library was made possible by the gifts of the Regenstein family of Chicago; the university hospitals and the medical school were all built from funds contributed by Chicago businessmen and the private philanthropic foundations which were of increasing importance by the time the University of Chicago established its own medical school.

Private philanthropic foundations had begun to function before World War I. After that war they took a position in the very front line of the patrons of the institutions of higher education. The General Education Board—a product of Rockefeller's munificence—had already been very active before the war. The University of Chicago benefited particularly from the Rockefeller Foundation and the Laura Spelman Memorial. The Rosenwald Fund, which was very generous, was the only one of the great foundations located in Chicago. Its founder had been one of the greatest local patrons of the university before the fund was created. It was housed very near the university and had a "special relationship" with it.

The contributions of the private philanthropic foundations did not displace those of private businessmen and their families in Chicago. They continued the philanthropy individually practiced by Rockefeller, but they never acquired the magnitude of his philanthropy in the flow of money to the university. Large sums were contributed in the 1920s by individuals in Chicago. Thus, the Wieboldt family, who owned a department store in Chicago, gave funds to construct a building for the teaching and study of modern languages and literatures; the Swift family provided the funds for the divinity school.

It has been asserted that the wealthy patrons of higher learning in Chicago came more frequently from the second generation rather than the first generation of wealth.<sup>2</sup> This might well be so, but it does not belie the fact that many wealthy persons—whether of the first or second generation—made possible the successful existence of the University of Chicago in its first quarter of a century because they believed that there should be a university of high intellectual quality in their city.

Why did these individuals and families give some of their wealth to the University of Chicago? "Class interest," expected economic benefits, and the desire of "rising professional classes" to legitimate themselves have been adduced to explain this philanthropic activity. It has also been asserted that the aim was to maintain the existing social order and to prevent revolutionary action to subvert it. Such a desire might have been operative in a few cases, but most of the objects for which large sums of money were given to the University of Chicago had practically no connection with the subversion or the conservation of the social order.

Certainly those persons who supported research in the social sciences in the University of Chicago before World War I—they were not so many—were interested in holding conflict in check or in reducing it; they favored harmony in society. Insofar as they supported the social sciences in universities, they often asserted that the reduction of conflict, prejudice, and antagonism was among the objectives to whose attainment they thought the social sciences would contribute. There was only one major sociological investigation supported by private philanthropy in the first quarter-century of the university; this was the study of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and in America*. Its senior author, W. I. Thomas, justified his research as a contribution to the reduction of conflict within the Polish immigrant community and between the Polish immigrants and the surrounding society. Nevertheless, it is fairly clear that Thomas's main objective was to understand the relationships between processes of assimilation and conflict. More pertinent for our purpose is that the donors of the funds wished to give Thomas a free hand to study the subject as he wished and to follow his intellectual bent as the spirit moved him. Similar intellectual interests presided over most of the research done at the University of Chicago; the patrons of that research did not demand anything different.

A university which teaches at the highest level and does research of similar quality cannot concentrate mainly on matters of local and practical interest. A partial exception must be made of some parts of the social sciences and a few descriptive subjects such as geology or geography for which local phenomena are appropriate for study, even though only as instances of more general patterns. Nor can a university which seeks to attain the highest levels of knowledge, general and historical, be directed preponderantly toward the satisfaction of practical interests.

When the University of Chicago was founded, the practical advantage of discovery and study was not in view except in a very vague and remote way.

There was no provision for a school of engineering, no school of agriculture, no school of law; there was not even a school of medicine—it was only after thirty-five years that the university established a medical school. The school of social service administration was brought into the university a quarter of a century after the university itself; previously it had been an independent institution. Thus, it could not be reasonably assumed that the University of Chicago was helped along its way because the businessmen who gave it their patronage wished to gain practical benefits for themselves individually, for their "social class," for their business enterprises, or for the economic system as a whole. There was certainly little articulated expectation that great practical benefits would flow to Chicago from the existence there of the university. What was expected was that it would be a university of very high quality, training, among others, highly educated Baptist clergymen. By the time the University of Chicago held its first classes, the last task was given only a secondary place.

It seems to me that the Chicago businessmen who supported the University of Chicago did so because they wished generally to promote the growth of knowledge and, no less important, because they wished to help the University of Chicago to be the kind of university Harper wanted it to be and thereby to be the kind of university which would be appropriate to the greatness of Chicago. By supporting the University of Chicago, they were contributing to the fuller realization of the urban society to which they were attached.

The University of Chicago was established and formed when the higher educational institutions of the country were growing in number, in size, and in their intellectual aspirations and accomplishments. That period was also one in which there was much contention about social and economic policy and about the proper role of government. Many of the academics, particularly social scientists, had been educated in Germany, where social scientists regarded themselves as commentators on and guides of governmental action regarding social and economic conditions. That tradition was one of those brought to the United States.

The period when the University of Chicago was taking form was also a period during which businessmen in the United States were proud and even self-righteous about their calling. They expected to be obeyed in their business firms and to be regarded with great respect everywhere else. They regarded trusteeships of universities and colleges as evidence of their probity, reliability, and soundness in judgment and decision. They regarded trusteeships as a heavy responsibility. In many cases they had very little understanding of the idea of a university; they understood little of the nature and necessity of far-reaching autonomy in academic matters. They took their trusteeships so much to heart that they regarded themselves as responsible for everything that went on in the university under their care.

The language of public contention and partisanship in the United States



has long been hyperbolic and accusatory and not least in the decades preceding World War I. Academics who spoke to or wrote for the larger non-academic public tended to be almost as inclined to use strong language as were the main protagonists to this contention, namely "capital" and "labor." Members of boards of trustees, many of them businessmen, were sometimes alarmed by the attitudes expressed by academics in their public declarations. These declarations were usually hostile toward businessmen and the market economy, and they often demanded governmental intervention on behalf of the industrial working classes and farmers. There were in consequence many situations in which there were real or threatened infringements of academic freedom; *academic freedom* is taken here to refer to the right of academics to espouse a political position in public outside the course of academic duties.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth there were numerous instances of dismissals of college and university teachers for their expression of collectivistic liberal or radical opinions outside their academic institutions or for membership or participation in associations that proclaimed revolutionary intentions.

The trustees of the University of Chicago, many of whom were notable financial benefactors of the university as well as successful businessmen, were exceptional in their self-restraint in such situations. It is possible, of course, that they were so impressed by the forceful character of William Rainey Harper and so persuaded by his resounding eloquence that they became pliant to his desires. They also probably felt an elevating kinship with his ideal; as local patriots they saw Chicago as elevated by it. In any case the trustees of the University of Chicago, despite assertions by critics such as Thorstein Veblen and Upton Sinclair, have an impressive history of self-restraint, for which there is ample evidence.

There is another benefit from the city of Chicago which has been enjoyed by the teachers of the University of Chicago which has little direct connection with the benefits conferred by businessmen. This is the city itself. Chicago, until recently, was unique in the world for its workaday vigor, the variety of cultures within it, its extraordinary animation and disorder, and its reputation for dramatic wars between gangsters. It was much more than that. At the one extreme it was the city Max Weber saw when he spent a short time there in about 1904. His widow summarized and then reproduced his own account of his impressions:

Chicago, that monstrous city. Here every contrast is accentuated: Ostentatious new wealth which exhibits itself in magnificent buildings of marble and gilded bronze, neglected poverty which stares out of dirty windows or dark and dirty doorways along endless, villainous streets, the restless agitation of a population, mixed from all the races and parts of the earth, a breathless pursuit of booty, the squandering of human lives which every day places the lives of thousands unthinkingly at risk, eternal building and tearing down, streets dug up, bottomless dirt, deafening sounds made louder by their competition with each other, and over all this a thick

smoke which throws a veil over every stone and every blade of grass and only rarely allows passage to the golden blue light of the sky or the silvery brilliance of the stars.<sup>3</sup>

Weber himself wrote:

Chicago is one of the most incredible cities. Alongside the lake, there are some comfortable and pretty residential areas, made up mainly of stone houses built in a very heavy and boring style; directly behind them are small old cottages exactly like what we have in Heligoland. Then we come to the workers' tenements; insanely filthy streets, unpaved, or outside the residential areas, atrociously paved. In the commercial and financial areas among the skyscrapers, the streets are in a hair-raising condition. Bituminous coal is burned there, when the hot dry winds blow through the streets from the deserts of the Southwest, the city makes a phantastic impression especially when the dark-yellow sun is setting. On a clear day one can see only about three blocks away—every thing—mist, smoke, the entire lake is covered by a mountainously high cloud of violet smoke, from which little steamers suddenly appear and into which the sails of the departing vessels disappear.

Throughout all this there is an infinite desert of human beings. One travels out of the commercial and financial district through Halsted Street—I think it is 20 English miles long—into infinite distance, past buildings with Greek signs "*xenodochien*" and the others with Chinese taverns, Polish advertisements, German beer saloons—until one reaches the stockyards. As far as one can see from the clock tower of the firm of Armour and Son—nothing but cattle lowing, bleating, endless filth—in all directions—for the town goes on for miles and miles until it loses itself in the vastness of the suburbs—churches and chapels, storage elevators, smoking chimneys (every large hotel has its own elevator run on a steam engine) and houses of every kind. Most of them are small—for only two families. This is why the town is so extraordinarily far-flung; the areas of the city are distinguished from each other in degrees of cleanliness in accordance with the nationality of the residents. The devil has broken loose in the stockyards: a lost strike with great numbers of Italians and Negroes brought in as strike-breakers; shootings daily with dozens dead at both sides; a trolley car was pitched over and a dozen women were crushed because a "non-union man" was sitting in it. There were threats of the use of dynamite against the "elevated-railway" on which a car was derailed and fell into the river. Close to our hotel, a cigar dealer was killed in broad daylight, a few streets away at dusk, three Negroes robbed a trolley car—all in all, a unique flowering of culture! There is a swarming interaction of all the peoples of the human race on every street. Greeks are polishing the shoes of Yankees for 5 cents, the Germans are their waiters, the Italians do the dirtiest heavy labor. The whole powerful city, more extensive than London—resembles, except for the better residential areas, a human being with his skin removed, and in which all the physiological process can be seen going on.<sup>4</sup>

There was much more to Chicago than the things described by Weber. Chicago was not only abhorrent; it also aroused a powerful moral reaction.

That moral reaction strengthened the bond between the strata from which the patrons of the university and a considerable fraction of the teachers of the university came.

No other American city had grown to the extent that Chicago had grown, and none had such a large fraction of its population made up of persons not native to the city. The immigrants in New York were disproportionately in the needle trades, which was a relatively genteel industrial occupation in comparison with the iron and steel industry and meatpacking which had become the major industries of Chicago. The laborers lived in conditions of squalor and discomfort. Many of the respectable immigrants from central, southern, and eastern Europe were organized around churches and associations comprising persons from particular villages or districts in the "old country." Many others, however, and particularly their children, fell outside these bodies. Thrust into self-dependence and isolation, they lost their way.

Against the corruption and many-sided disorder and the horrors described by Weber, citizens of the upper-middle classes tried to take action, partly by influencing public opinion so that in its turn it could precipitate changes in governmental practices and institutions. There was also much activity which was not aimed at bringing about changes in governmental practices but rather at creating private institutions for the benefit of the victims of the terrible conditions of urban life and also to stimulate the voluntary activities of the victims for their own benefit. There were also movements of governmental reform in Chicago.

The reformers were businessmen, lawyers, social workers, publishers, newspapermen, and clergymen, and the wives of all of these as well. Nearly a quarter of the teachers of the University of Chicago were very active in these movements of reform during their height. The civic interests of the reformers overlapped with the civic and intellectual interests of the university teachers. Some of the latter were social scientists who were interested primarily in learning about the situations which the reformers were attempting to change; some of these social scientists were also eager to contribute directly to the improvement of those situations.

The history of the reform movements in Chicago from the time of the founding of the university until the election of President Franklin Roosevelt is intricately intertwined with the history of the university. John Dewey, James H. Tufts, George Herbert Mead, Charles Judd, and Marion Talbot were active in efforts to improve the education offered in the public schools. They sought to influence the mode of governing the schools, the training and appointment of teachers, the provision of vocational education and guidance, and nearly every other problem of elementary and secondary education. They interested themselves in the revision of the city charter and the relations between the state of Illinois and the city of Chicago, the organization of the collection of taxes, and the distribution of the taxing power. They interested themselves in labor legislation and industrial health. They interested themselves in morals, in the control if not the elimination of prostitution, venereal disease, and alcoholism. They interested themselves in the care and protection

of newly arrived immigrants. They interested themselves in Negro migrants. They were especially interested in establishing a rational system of probation and parole. They interested themselves in harbors and transportation.

To all these problems they brought what they regarded as the scientific approach. From the Hull House Papers to the surveys about the conditions of life and work in and around the stockyards, they continued the tradition which had reached a high point in Charles Booth's *Survey of London Life and Labour* and which was brought into the United States in the Springfield and Pittsburgh Surveys. In these activities Sophonisba Breckenridge and Edith Abbott, both professors of social service administration at the University of Chicago following the incorporation of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy into the university, were dynamos who communicated their energy throughout the reform movement. Charles Merriam, professor of political science, served on the aldermanic council for some years and in one mayoral campaign came close to election. Even Robert Park and William I. Thomas, the sociologists who were distrustful of the unrealism of reformers, were drawn into the movement, Thomas as a member of the Vice Commission of Chicago and Park as the first president of the Chicago branch of the National Urban League as well as (informal) research director of the Commission on Race Relations.

None of these myriad activities was entirely in the hands of university teachers from the University of Chicago alone or from the University of Chicago and Northwestern University together. There was an intense and relatively harmonious collaboration with other reformers who lived in Chicago and cared about it—businessmen, lawyers, physicians, social workers, journalists and publishers, and clergymen.

These jointly conducted activities made for a sense of community among the participants, most of whom were also "civic patriots," very conscious of being Chicagoans and proud of their city's importance in the world, even though they found much in it that was in great need of improvement. The teachers at the University of Chicago shared these attitudes—at least some of them did—and their pride in their city and their university was sustained by their associations with these critical but loyal civic patriots.

There have been intermittent efforts ever since antiquity to describe contemporary societies. The formation of the large urban agglomerations rendered more visible and more horrifying the "state of the poor." Social reformers, statisticians, criminologists, and others became preoccupied with the poor in the large cities. The department of sociology of the University of Chicago was established to make of the systematic observation and analysis of modern society an academic subject. *Modern society* was interpreted to mean urban society.

It took some years for the program to be put into practice. From the beginning Professor Charles H. Henderson had inspired his students to write reports on their firsthand observations of some small bit of life in Chicago. Henderson himself was not a very sophisticated investigator, but his expecta-



tions of his students helped to set a pattern which became a tradition at the university. Albion Small, the head of the department of sociology and dean of the arts and sciences, also regarded this kind of fieldwork as most important, although as a professor he never did any such research himself. Under his teaching and encouragement this new kind of sociological research slowly got under way at the University of Chicago.

Beginning in about 1908, W. I. Thomas, then a teacher in the department of sociology, became interested in the Polish immigrants in Chicago, whom he wished to investigate against the background of their earlier lives in Poland. (Thomas himself was one of the first recipients of the doctoral degree from the department of sociology at the university.) This landmark of local and international sociological research was supported by a Chicago philanthropist, Helen Culver, a notable woman of strong intellectual and civic interests and heiress to a great fortune made in Chicago. She supplied the funds for Thomas to be free from the obligations of teaching for a certain period each year for a number of years.

In 1912 Thomas succeeded in persuading a selfless seeker after an understanding of society named Robert Park to join the department at the University of Chicago. Park was an exceptionally sensitive and imaginative person of vast experience of the world and a curiosity of universal scope. Once well settled in Chicago, Park, who had once been a newspaperman in Detroit, began a series of explorations of the city of Chicago, together with his graduate students. The result was a series of monographs based on unprecedentedly intensive participant-observation, historical study, and the examination of governmental and private archival records.

Boys' gangs, family life, residential mobility, ethnic and religious communities, juvenile delinquency, divorce, suicide, the life of the wealthy, vagrants, entertainers, and the professions were among the constituents of the life of Chicago studied under Park's inspiration. Some of these works when published became established as contributions of lasting value to the academic discipline of sociology. More important for our interest is their precipitation of a sense of intimacy among University of Chicago sociologists with the city and the awareness of various strata of Chicago society that the city was under study. These studies were contributions to a more differentiated and realistic collective self-consciousness.

It was not Park alone who was active in this kind of work. Ernest Burgess, Park's younger colleague and collaborator, continued this work after Park retired in the first half of the 1930s. Burgess deepened the intimate contact with the lower strata of Chicago society while continuing the close relationship with the reformers of the upper-middle class and social workers. Burgess was interested in the family, especially in familial stability and instability, and in juvenile crime which had been associated with familial instability in the eyes of the reformers of the years before World War I. Burgess's interests and views kept alive the alliance between the university and the urban reformers of those earlier years.

Burgess went farther than the earlier partners in the alliance but along

the same lines; he was an active participant in the work of the Illinois Crime Commission. His pupil John Landesco, once a student in the department of sociology, published as part of the report of the commission a monograph on the "42 gang"; it was a pioneering study of organized crime which later became famous as a sociological monograph.

Civic-spirited members of the upper strata were kept in awareness of the University of Chicago by Burgess, and they were ready to turn to him whenever they desired detached, systematic knowledge and judgment. Burgess, at the request of the Crime Commission, investigated the factors affecting success and failure in the granting of parole. Here again, although the collaboration was relatively specialized and narrow, the tradition of close relations between leading citizens and the University of Chicago was kept alive.

Burgess extended his collaboration with citizen reformers in Chicago outside the university when he took a hand in the establishment and work of the Institute for Juvenile Research. This body was a section of a larger institution, the Illinois Institute of Mental Health. Burgess placed several of his best students in sociology in a program of research at the institute into juvenile delinquency. Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay were among them. They developed further the technique of documentation created by Thomas in *The Polish Peasant*, namely the life history. A number of important books, such as *The Jack Roller* and *The Natural History of a Delinquent Career*, as well as a solid piece of work on *Delinquency Areas*, came out of the institute's program. These books were illuminating to magistrates, social workers, penologists, and penal administrators.

In the 1930s Burgess undertook a new project which required an even closer collaboration between the university and the inhabitants of the city of Chicago. The Area Project was a practical application of the results of scholarly studies of the conditions which gave rise to juvenile delinquency. Proceeding on the basis of Thomas's ideas about "social organization and disorganization," Burgess persuaded some of his graduate students to take up residence in working-class districts with high rates of delinquency and criminality. Then, with the collaboration of leading figures of the neighborhood, they fostered the formation of informal institutions which could assimilate, guide, and discipline the conduct of adolescent boys and youths so that they would be law-abiding instead of becoming delinquents and then criminals. The collaboration went so far that after World War II two of Burgess's former student collaborators became, respectively, chief warden of the Cook County Prison and sheriff of Cook County.

These were the high points of one side of sociological study of the city of Chicago. Another side was the study of the human ecology of Chicago developed by Park and Burgess in a series of studies of the residential location and the social institutions of ethnic groups such as Italians, Poles, Jews, and Negroes, and of the location of industrial and commercial activities in specialized zones within the city and its suburbs. The study of *A Century of Urban Land Values*, by Homer Hoyt, particularly in the central business district, brought the University of Chicago into a connection with businessmen in a way quite

different from the relationship between benefactor and beneficiary, or trustee and teacher, or civic reformer and university professor.

This relationship began to change as soon as the interests of the department of sociology changed from the study of local society toward the study of national institutions and situations. The interest in national technological trends, in the professions (without any particular local reference), in labor relations without reference to particular local industries, and in social stratification outside Chicago, and the development of the sample opinion survey as a technique of research for national surveys, meant that Chicago as an object of sociological attention receded from vision, and the once very close cognitive and social relationships between the department of sociology and the city diminished. The intimacy with the city which teachers of sociology possessed and which students acquired became greatly attenuated. It still exists, but the interest in the city is no longer the most actively pursued interest of the department.

Charles Merriam, professor of political science, had a similar intimacy with Chicago; his pupils and junior colleagues, like Park's, explored the political system in a way in which no other city had been studied. They studied the local political machines, the local civil service and public attitudes toward it, differences in the voting of the wards of Chicago, political bosses, Negro political leaders, the relations between municipal and suburban governments, and so on. The department of economics, at a time when economics was more descriptive or institutional than it has since become, studied, through the research of teachers and graduates, rates of remuneration and relations between employers and employees in particular industries in Chicago, standards of living of the poorer strata of the population of the city, the financial influence of Chicago in the Midwest, and fiscal problems of the city and the county. Such research gained the attention of employers, trade union leaders, politicians and municipal officials, social workers, and bankers. Sometimes economists were invited to serve as arbitrators in disputes about such matters as wages or conditions of work. As economics became more analytical and more interested in seeing its objects in a national and worldwide perspective, the study of economic institutions and economic activities in Chicago fell by the wayside.

The department of education of the University of Chicago has long had a very active interest in the public educational system of Chicago and has maintained cooperative relations with the authorities of the Chicago educational system not only through consultation and the instruction of teachers, prospective and currently active, but also through the performance of research. Historians at the University of Chicago have for a long time interested themselves in the history of Chicago in a wide variety of aspects. Forty years ago Bessie Pierce, a professor in the department of history, completed a history of Chicago in three large volumes, and since that time there have been numerous dissertations on the history of particular parts of Chicago society, ethnic groups, philanthropic activities of the higher strata, politicians, and political organizations.

The very productive investigation of Chicago society by the sociologists, political scientists, and to a lesser extent educationists, economists, and historians did two things for the university in its relation to the city. It gave the university an intimacy with the day-to-day life of the lower and lower-middle strata of the population which academics seldom acquire. And it extended and enriched the collective consciousness of at least a part of the university academic staff. These investigations contributed to a greater awareness of the more educated and better-off strata with the other parts of the population. It is certainly true that newspapers and fiction contributed to this enlarged, more comprehensive collective consciousness. In Chicago the process was greatly aided by the academic investigation of the city.

In the many-sided relationship between the University of Chicago and the life of the city of Chicago, there was one striking lacuna. This occurred in relation to Chicago as a literary center.

Chicago was one of the main centers of American literature in the period when the University of Chicago was ascending. While it had a very lively interchange with the upper-middle classes in the professions and in business, it had very little connection with the society of literary men and women. There is no indication of any relationship between Willa Cather or Sherwood Anderson or Theodore Dreiser and the University of Chicago or between Floyd Dell or Carl Sandburg or Maxwell Bodenheim or Ben Hecht or David Graham Phillips or Edward Fuller and the University of Chicago. Nor is there any sign that *The Dial*, from 1916 onward, when it became the chief organ of "the new spirit" on life and letters, had any significant connection with the University of Chicago. Indeed, so negligible was the journal's relationship to the University of Chicago that two years after it took on its new role it left Chicago for New York. Previously, when *The Dial* was not yet an organ of the new literary and artistic culture but was a sober and seemly magazine which claimed to carry on the tradition of *The Dial* of the Cambridge transcendentalists, it had numerous contributors from the University of Chicago. These included Paul Shorey, Charles Henderson, Albion Small, and William Rainey Harper himself. In its rebirth its only connection with the university was Robert Morss Lovett, who was already connected with progressivistic thought in New York through his participation in the editorial work of *The New Republic*.

There was a sickly Bohemia at the eastern perimeter of the university quarter, but it had no connection with the University of Chicago. There was none at all with the bohemia of the near north side except for the occasional inquiries of a graduate student from the department of sociology.

*The Little Review*, which was a periodical no less important in modern literature than *The Dial* between the time of its founding in 1916 and its cessation in 1929, remained in Chicago only for the first two years of its life. It moved to New York at about the same time as *The Dial*. Its editor, Margaret Anderson, called herself an anarchist; she had no connections with the University of Chicago.

In contrast with this mutual indifference of the literary men and women who lived in Chicago and the University of Chicago is the sympathetic relationship of the latter with *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. This magazine, founded and edited by Harriet Monroe, who came from a wealthy Chicago family, was supported financially by the same section of Chicago society as contributed to the support of the University of Chicago and collaborated with the teachers of the university in various projects of social and political reform. *Poetry* was the chief organ of the greatest achievements of English and American poetry of the twentieth century. It published very early the work of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, Edgar Lee Masters, Robert Frost, and James Joyce. But it had only one contributor of note from the University of Chicago: William Vaughan Moody.

After Monroe ceased to be editor, two academics, Morton Dauwen Zabel and Henry Rago, served as editors of *Poetry*. Zabel was not a professor at the University of Chicago when he was editor; he came there only subsequently. Rago was a teacher at Chicago during his editorship. But these relationships developed rather late in the history of *Poetry*. Nevertheless, there was more sympathy between the department of English at the university and *Poetry* than there was with any of the manifestations of the new spirit in literature. This might have been more a consequence of Monroe's connection with "high society" in Chicago than of the kind of literary works she published.

The very weak ties of the University of Chicago to the literary life of Chicago help to define more precisely the relationship between the university and the city. A certain part of Chicago society and the university had in common a puritanical outlook on life. Both the society of the patrons of the university and the teachers and administrators of the university shared the belief that life was a serious matter. Despite the removal of the requirement of Baptist affiliation for the presidency and membership in the board of trustees, and regardless of church attendance or theological belief, there was more than a trace of Christian piety, both in the circles of patrons of the university and among the university teachers. Frivolity and sacrilegious attitudes were frowned upon in both circles. This strengthened the bond. But it also separated the university from the literary life of Chicago in its great period.

While the University of Chicago was being recast from a college, which it was intended to be by Rockefeller, to the university which Harper wanted it to be, the universities which would have been its two main rivals, Johns Hopkins and Clark, were in difficulties. Johns Hopkins was hamstrung financially by its obligation to keep its endowment in shares of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; Clark was breaking up in the conflict between its president, G. Stanley Hall, and its founder, Jonas Gilman Clark, over the issue of whether the university should concentrate on undergraduate education or on graduate training. Harvard, Yale, and Columbia were moving unsteadily and unevenly into the condition of being modern universities in the sense of assigning as much importance to research and the training of graduate students as to the education of undergraduates.

Harper went to great pains to attract the leading scholars and scientists of the country to the University of Chicago. He offered relatively large salaries to win them away from other universities; he also attempted to persuade young scholars and scientists of outstanding promise or achievement. Already by 1892 there were men who in a short time became known for originality of thought and productivity: Thomas Chamberlin, Charles O. Whitman, Albert Michelson, George E. Hale, Albion W. Small, Paul Shorey, James Tufts, Jacques Loeb, Carl D. Buck, William M. Wheeler, James Breasted, John Dewey, and Thorstein Veblen joined the university not long afterward.

Within two decades the University of Chicago established itself as one of the leading universities of the United States, and it was beginning to be appreciated as such by European universities. Albert Michelson, professor of physics at the university, was the first American to be awarded a Nobel prize in a scientific subject; this was fifteen years after the opening of the university. The second American to win the Nobel prize in physics, Robert K. Millikan, had spent his formative years as a teacher at the University of Chicago. (He was won away from Chicago by a former professor of the university, the astronomer George Hale, who had made a great name at Chicago and who became the president of the California Institute of Technology.) The third American to receive a Nobel prize in physics was also a teacher at the University of Chicago. This was Arthur H. Compton in 1927. Professors at the university soon became important in scientific organizations. Hale became very crucial in the National Academy of Sciences. Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory, which came to be of the greatest importance in the development of biological research in the United States, was stimulated and directed by C. O. Whitman, professor of zoology at the university. James Breasted, although not generously treated by Harper, became greatly esteemed in Egyptological circles everywhere. In the 1930s the Oriental Institute, which had been founded by Breasted and made famous by his work, was greatly strengthened by a number of very distinguished German refugees. It was one of the major centers in the world for the study of the ancient Middle East. By the 1920s and 1930s the University of Chicago was at the very forefront in the social sciences, especially in sociology, economics, and political science.

The University of Chicago has been in a paradoxical situation. No other university of worldwide eminence in intellectual and educational achievement has at the same time been so intimately linked with its local society in so many ways. It is certainly true that its financial support has not been predominantly local, but that support has probably come to a greater extent from locally resident and locally active benefactors than any other major university in the world. Columbia University has undoubtedly received a great deal of its support from local benefactors, but it is not as local a university as the University of Chicago in the sense that in New York the stratum of prospective benefactors is far larger than it is in Chicago, and the objects of their benefactions are also very much more numerous.

In Chicago the university was one of a small number of important objects of benefaction by a much smaller circle of benefactors. The University of Chicago has had for this reason a very special relationship to the city of Chicago and particularly to the plutocracy of Chicago. Each meant more to the other than was the case of Columbia in relation to New York. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford, the other leading private universities of the United States, are again in a rather different situation from Chicago. They have depended far less on local benefaction; their local societies have been too small and not as generously respectful toward learning to become important to their respective universities.

For these reasons the University of Chicago is bound to be more sensitive to changes in the pattern of American society than other important universities which are less richly linked to their local settings. All universities in the United States as well as in Europe have become less local in the past half-century. They all depend much more on the central government of their respective countries for research funds. They have also become very dependent on the central government for the funds needed for teaching activities and the support of students. Large private philanthropic foundations, with national programs and without special relationships to the universities in the cities in which they are located, are also very important patrons of universities. The financial support provided by private individual benefactors, locally resident and locally active, has become less important in the life of American universities. But it has certainly not evaporated.

There are several reasons for this. For one thing, universities have become so much more costly that private patronage by individuals can now no longer meet the costs of the university, even to the extent that it once did. Furthermore, locally resident plutocracies are less interested in their localities than they were in earlier generations. Resident plutocracies do not have their wealth in local property and local business enterprises to the extent that they used to. They share less in the local collective consciousness since their wealth is not local.

The mode of acquisition of wealth and forms of wealth of the plutocracy are both less local. Takeovers disregard the moral claims of local institutions. Fortunes made by speculation in options trading have no particular local connection.

There have been other changes in American society which have changed the relationships between universities in large cities and the populations of those cities. The large cities of the United States are increasingly and predominantly black and Latin American in the composition of their population. These groups are recent immigrants to the cities; they are generally ill educated and live in more socially disorganized settlements than was true of the European immigrants who came to the United States between 1880 and 1912.

The European immigrants tended to be more deferential to the educated classes and were more reliant on themselves for their necessities. They were not clamorous in their demands for goods and services. They were more per-

vaded by the Protestant ethic—this was also true of the Roman Catholics. Their local political domination was generally not unsympathetic with universities except perhaps in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where the Irish Roman Catholics thought they were spurned and maltreated by Harvard University. In Chicago, despite the fact that some professors of the University of Chicago were very active in reform movements and were supported by the residents of the university area in their efforts to displace the incumbent local politicians and to hamstring their political organizations, the professional politicians had a respectful and at times benevolent attitude toward the university. This tradition seems to be in danger of dissipation. There is a prospect that after having lived in relative harmony for many years there will in the future be a greatly increased strain in the relations between the University of Chicago and the ruling politicians.

There is another, quite unrelated factor, which is weakening the tie between the University of Chicago and the city of Chicago. Social investigation has become more national and less local. Its mode of organization does not foster the growth of intimate knowledge in the investigation of the object studied. The University of Chicago grew up at a time when the mode of social investigation favored the growth of such intimate knowledge of the local society. This has now changed for reasons both of the method or technique of investigation and of the investigator's interest. Hence the unique cognitive bond between the social scientists of a particular university and their local society, which was especially strong in Chicago in the past, has become greatly attenuated.

These are all relatively minor matters as far as the quality of performance of a university is concerned. It is obvious that there have been great universities which have thrived without local private patronage and without extensive treatment in the local press. The important factors in the life of a university are the intellectual quality of its teachers and students, their moral concern for learning, and their respect for the tradition which they receive and their capacity to revise and enrich that tradition. Internal academic citizenship, internal arrangements, and the relationships with other universities are important. The intellectual morale of teachers and students makes a tangible difference, and there the appreciation of the laity is vital. It need not, however, be entirely a local laity; a national laity is perhaps more important nowadays in the United States, and it has long been so as far back as the ancient universities of England. Still, a laity which is near at hand and visible, generous and appreciative, is bound to remain of great value to a university.

Local philanthropy is valuable not only for the money it provides but also for the tangible confidence it shows in the university. A favorable state of opinion regarding universities in general and the particular university encourages university teachers. Local opinion is manifested not only in monetary patronage but also in friendliness and conviviality and political support. All these are necessary to strengthen and support a university against various groups and individuals who wish to hamper research or to restrict the intellectual freedom of university teachers.

The University of Chicago from the beginning has been exceptionally fortunate in its relations with the city of Chicago. The situation at present is less favorable than it was in earlier decades. Nevertheless, there is no likelihood that the society of the city of Chicago in its present form will do anything to break abruptly the ties between itself and the university which have flourished for many decades; nor is there any likelihood that the university would do so. What is much more of a danger is that the wealthy businessmen and powerful politicians will fail to nourish that image of the completeness of a city which required a great university in its midst. Aristotle said that willful negligence is one of the causes of revolution. Willful negligence can also be a cause of the ruin of cities and institutions.

#### NOTES

1. Thomas Wakefield Goodspeed, *A History of the University of Chicago: The First Quarter Century* (Chicago, 1916), p. 274.
2. Frederick Jaher, *The Urban Establishment* (Urbana, Ill., 1982), pp. 520–21.
3. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: Ein Lebensbild* (Tuebingen, 1926), p. 298.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 298–99.

# 13

## Urban Flights: The Institute of Social Research Between Frankfurt and New York

*Martin Jay*

The theme of the city and the university provides a welcome opportunity to clarify an aspect of the Frankfurt School's history that has always troubled me. I refer to the vexed problem of its roots in the social and cultural conditions of its day, the link between its Critical Theory and the context which in some sense or another allowed it to emerge. As wary as I have always been of the sociology of knowledge in its more reductionist forms, I have also never felt comfortable with the school's reticence about exploring its own origins, an attitude best expressed in Theodor Adorno's remark that "a stroke of undeserved luck has kept the mental composition of some individuals not quite adjusted to the prevailing norms."<sup>1</sup> Even luck, deserved or not, seems to me worth trying to explain, and perhaps in the case of the Frankfurt School, looking at its relations to the cities and universities with which it was connected may provide some help. For, after all, it is not every group of intellectuals whose very name suggests both an urban and an academic link.

Even more understanding may ensue if we remember that the sobriquet "Frankfurt School" was only a late concoction of the 1960s and was never perfectly congruent with the Institute of Social Research out of which it came. The disparity between the research institute and the school of thought which emerged within its walls has, in fact, led some observers to call into question the coherence of the phenomenon as a whole. No less involved a figure than Jürgen Habermas has recently remarked that although the institute continues, "there is no longer any question of a school, and that is undoubtedly a good thing."<sup>2</sup>

Rather than abandoning the search for coherence because of the historical and nominal displacements of the institute and the school, it seems to me more fruitful to acknowledge the unsettled and protean nature of a cultural formation that nonetheless did retain a certain fluid identity over time. As