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Intellectual Integration

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INTELLECTUAL INTEGRATION

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In this paper, I want to talk about the activity of intellectual integration itself: about what it can mean to integrate—to put together in a complex whole—aspects of our culture, or of the world, that seem to us disparate or unconnected; and what it can mean in so doing to integrate—to bring together in interactive life—aspects of our own minds and beings that we normally separate or divide from each other. I want to think of integration, that is—and of its opposite, disintegration—as taking place on two planes of existence at once, the cultural and the individual. For what is at stake for us in the fragmentation of our culture is the fragmentation of our own minds and lives; and the integrative processes by which we resist this fragmentation on one plane of experience, as we try to bring things together to make new wholes, are simultaneously at work on the other as well.

To speak of "integration" may be a bit misleading, for to some this term may imply an ideal of perfect unity or coherence, a reduction to a dominant scheme in which every part has its proper and defined place. But I mean to use the term rather differently, to include a tolerance for, indeed a clarification of, diversity and difference. For me integration is at its heart a kind of composition, and that in a literal sense: a putting together of two things to make out of them a third, a new whole, with a meaning of its own. In this process the elements combined do not lose their identities but retain them, often in clarified form; yet each comes to mean something different as well, when it is seen in relation to the other. In this sense each element is transformed, as it becomes part of something else, at a new level of complexity. At the same time we ourselves

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are transformed as well, both as makers of the new object in the world and as those who engage with it.

I shall begin to elucidate these somewhat Delphic remarks by talking about poetry, and about one short poem in particular; but by the end I shall have reached far beyond it to what we normally think of as quite different kinds of subjects, including law, the university, and the nature of our minds.

I.

I start with poetry because it seems largely built on the principle I have articulated, that we put two things together in such a way as to make a third—different from the others yet respectful of them—with a meaning of its own.

Think for example of the sounds of poetry. As Robert Frost said, the poem, or at least the English poem, is in large measure built upon the music that can be made by the tension between two different ways of organizing sound: the sound of the meter and rhythm, in English most naturally that of the iambic line, and the sound of the sentence as it would be spoken in living speech. In the poem these two principles of order begin and end together, but between those points they run in harmony and contrast to create a kind of music, almost as two melodic lines might do. The effect is to create something new in the space between mere musical prose on the one hand and mere singsong versification on the other. Consider how this works in the following well-known and very short poem by Robert Frost.

Dust of Snow

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.[1]

If you read this poem aloud you will feel the tension between the force of its meter and rhyme, which works on the principle of recurring forms and variations, and that of the long sentence of which it is made, which has its own shape, turning after "mood" to surprise us with what the meter has promised us, a momentary uplift.

These two principles of order provide different energies for continu-

[1] R. FROST, *Dust of Snow*, in THE POETRY OF ROBERT FROST (E. Lathem ed. 1972). Copyright 1923, ©1969 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., Copyright 1951 by Robert Frost. Reprinted from THE POETRY OF ROBERT FROST edited by Edward Connery Lathem, by permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc. and Jonathan Cape, Ltd.

ation and cessation as well. Thus at one point in the poem the syntactic sentence comes to an end—at "mood"—and we feel the necessity, or probability, of stopping there; but we also know that we can't, for we are only halfway through the rhyme scheme in the stanza, and this knowledge carries us forward two more lines. Or it works the other way: we come to the end of the first stanza, which is a kind of closure; but the sentence has not ended, and the force of our syntactical expectations carries us forward into the second. When the two systems close together at the end, they do so with reinforced finality. They become one not through merger, a loss of identity, but through interaction. Each is in fact heard with new distinctness as it is poised against the other, the sentence sound against the meter and rhyme, the meter and rhyme against the sentence sound. The reader holds both in his head at once.

To shift now from the sound of a poem to its images, think of what this poem asks us to imagine. The black crow is given visual significance by its juxtaposition with the white snow and the green hemlock (all the colors unstated but necessary, known to us); but they have necessarily symbolic significances too, for the crow and snow become images of death, at least when they are combined with hemlock, which necessarily reminds us of the poisonous root of which Socrates drank the liquor. The images thus fall simultaneously into two planes of meaning, the natural and the symbolic. In this poem they do not merge, in part because one kind of hemlock really is different from the other—you can make a healthful hemlock tea from the tree in the poem—but remain in tension to create something new in the space between them. There are two systems of meaning simultaneously at work here, the image of the walk in the woods, with its minor catastrophe suddenly seen as a grace note, and the far more foreboding system of symbolism—death and redemption—which hints at Grace of a different kind altogether. Part of the art of the poem is keeping a distance between the two planes of meaning, so that both are held in the mind at once, each playing against the other to make a third.

The word "dust" from this point of view is lovely: it specifies the visual image with great exactness, as we imagine the snow so dry and crystalline that it bursts like shining dust in the air, while in the other plane of meaning it reinforces the images of death, for we all know that dust we are and unto dust we shall return.

With respect to the image-life of this poetry, then, just as with respect to its sounds, there are two principles of life and order, brought together not to merge but to interact, to make a third thing out of the life between them.

At least in representational poetry of the kind we see in Frost, there is a similar opposition in another respect as well, for the poem creates a tension between the sense that it represents an experience that is external to it—the fall of snow—and the sense that it is itself a new experience, in

language, with a meaning of its own. Just as the viewer of a painting sees it now as a picture of the world, now as a composition in paint, the audience of the poem hears it now as an account of the world, now as a composition in words.

And there is a similar doubleness in another dimension too, that of time, for the poem can be seen as either taking place in time or as an atemporal structure. That is, it can be thought of as it appears on the page, as a structure that exists in two dimensions, spatially, to be described and explained by drawing connecting and contrasting arrows. Or it can be seen as taking place in time, as read aloud say, with a beginning and an ending, a moving from one place to another in a process of change.

This sort of transformation across time is in fact essential to the life of a poem. Think, for example, of the way the poem works on what precedes it, turning Autumn, say, into Keats's poem "To Autumn," as apples are turned into cider, or the dust of snow down the neck into "A Dust of Snow," just as the dust of snow turned the day from one thing into another. The poem converts what lies outside of it into its terms, and does this not only with such ordinary-world experiences as these, but with prior texts as well, such as those that give meaning to "hemlock" and "dust." And the poem itself is self-transformative too, autopoetic, making itself—or being made by the poet and the reader together—out of its own origins, as a life is made, line by line. For from its first utterance it establishes expectations that the rest of it will confirm or upset or modify, at each stage making new beginnings, giving rise to new expectations of its own.[2] It is only when we read the poem as taking place in time that we can experience the "surprise" that Frost thought essential to

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[2] Think, for example, of Keats's great poem "To Autumn," which begins with hyperfruition:

> Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
> Close bosom friend of the maturing sun

and ends in crispness and clarity. The art of the poem, or much of it, lies in how we get from one place to the other: the initial sense of excessive, distasteful fecundity, of deceit or conspiracy; the long rallentando of the second stanza, which delays the change of things and delays it further, making us impatient and reducing the world to the "last oozings" of the cider press; and the great pleasure afforded by the shift at the end to evening, to late autumn, and to sunset:

> Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
> The redbreast whistles from a garden croft;
> And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

J. KEATS, *To Autumn*, in THE POETICAL WORKS OF JOHN KEATS 273 (H.W. Garrod 2d ed. 1958). Similarly here, in Frost's poem, there is a transformation of the original trite event, the irritating fall of snow from the tree, into a moment laden with gentle ominousness, and then, by an act of poetic grace, into an emblem of grace itself, for it "saves" what we have every reason to "rue," or repent.

In all of this the poem is made of the same stuff as human life, the life of its maker and its audience: it takes place in time, it is autopoetic, made out of its own beginnings, and it converts what is outside of itself into internally determined, though always tentative, forms. As a form, then, the poem is in this respect about the way we grow and live, about the processes of integration and transformation it exemplifies.

the poetic experience—here the surprise of discovering that the dust of snow did not ruin the day but saved it, saved it from an earlier "ruing."

On the other hand, no one fully reads a poem the first time through and our successive readings work to create a sense of the whole poem existing outside of time and space, in an ideal realm. The re-readings result in a kind of increasing appropriation of the verbal artifact to our own consciousness. Ultimately the "temporal" sense we have of the poem is not an accurate representation of any one actual reading, but a constructed reading, an ideal reading taking place in ideal time as well as ideal space, a world in which there is in fact no transformation, for the whole poem exists simultaneously. The poem comes to have both existences at once in our minds, the temporal and transformative poised against the atemporal and schematic, and much of its life is the play between them.

To speak even more generally for a moment, in each of the dimensions I have mentioned—of sound, image, and time—there is a tension between order and disorder: between the too regular, and thus singsong and dead, and the wholly irregular or chaotic; between affirmation and denial; between what can be said and what is unsayable; and in all of this the poem puts together two things, two possibilities, in such a way as to create a life between them.

All this means, among other things, that the poem cannot be reduced to paraphrase. It brings to life, and integrates, several dimensions of speech at once: it places them in relation across space and time, and in so doing creates something new of its own. It cannot be reduced to a statement of this or that theory or message, to optimism or pessimism. It is in fact a kind of speech with which "stating views" or "having a theory" or "delivering a message" is inconsistent; as a form, indeed, it is critical of the assumptions on which such speech rests.

II.

What happens when we turn from the dense and concentrated form of speech we call the poem to the forms of speech we ourselves employ, especially in our academic and professional lives—when we look to the texts, to the modes of discourse, we inhabit and create? What voices do we hear, and find ourselves using? What kinds of conversations make up our world? Are the texts we make and read integrative and transforming, as a poem is, and if not, could they be?

A.

Think for example of the piles of books and journal articles that litter your office: With what expectations and what feelings do you turn to them? If you are at all like me, you do so with a feeling of guilty dread and with an expectation of frustration. We live in a world of specialized

texts and discourses, which all too often seem marked by a kind of thinness, a want of life and force and meaning. How often, for example, do you simply skim-read what is before you, and how often do you feel that nothing is lost?

But what does it say about us, if this is true, if the literature we read and write, the literature that defines our professional lives, can be skim-read with so little loss? What kind of intellectual or other community is defined by such voices, directed to such an audience? If you can skim-read it, the text has a quality that is the opposite of poetic density, a kind of extraordinary dilutedness.

Sometimes, of course, a voice arrests us, we slow down, perhaps we move our chair and settle into a different position, or take something home and think it through, paying a different kind of attention to it altogether. But how rare that is.

Do I exaggerate? Perhaps I do, but as a way of checking that, let me ask you to suppose that you take a recent issue of the leading journal in your field—or a general publication, say like the *New York Review of Books*—and read it from cover to cover, then ask what minds, what discourse, what conversation, what intellectual community you could construct on the basis of that evidence, if it were all that you had. What would these imagined speakers be like, as minds and as people? What responses do they invite from you, what relationship do they seek to establish with you?

A wit once said of the highly oppositional and dramatic prose of Macaulay that it is impossible to tell the truth in such a style. We can borrow that remark and ask: What truths can be said in the styles and voices and forms we ourselves professionally use? Certainly anyone who has ever worked on a law journal must have wondered what could possibly be said in the form we call the "law review article," in the language and voice of that genre—anything, that is, in which any person could have any real interest. Of how many law review articles can one say, here is a mind really speaking to other minds?

I pick on the law, with which I am perhaps most familiar, but I think much the same could be said of professional discourse in other fields. Part of the problem is what I have called thinness—so little life; but part of it is too much life of a certain kind, an insistent assertiveness, as if against something, against some other person who is denying what is said. This is how things are, we are told; a deafening note of demand. Yet am I insisting otherwise, or are you? Why then are we spoken to in such a way? Too often the academic text that is written against the views of others naturally seeks to meet every imagined objection in the language in which it might be made, but in doing this it loses its control over its own shape, its own language.

As I imagine the books and journals piled up in my office, then, I want to ask: Where is writing that is about something that is actually

important to the mind that composed it, regarded not as a professional agent seeking a new relationship with a professional community, but as a mind, trying to make sense of life and of the texts that make it up? Where is the voice that compels attention by its authenticity, its urgency, its presence, and invites a response from another? Or—to think of this for the moment from the institutional or communal point of view—where is a conversation among a plurality of such voices? The university should be the place *par excellence* for disinterested and passionate talk of such a kind, but is it in fact? What kind of talk, among what kinds of voices, defines your profession, your university, your larger culture?

So far I have been speaking as if the problem were out there, in texts made by others, in them not us, in our reading not our writing, but of course this is not true. The worst and most painful consequences of the conditions of our discourse are those we suffer when we ourselves try to write and find that we are captured by voices, audiences, and languages that seem impossibly sterile or empty; diluted; defensive; full of static; in a deep sense unreal. Think of one's own composing life: how often one feels, as one listens to one's speech, that one is droning on and on, in a tone of insistent demand, or that one's words are like broken chiclets in the mouth, impeding one's talk to the point of inanity. Or how often one turns in dismay the pages one has written, hearing in them the voice of Anyprof and wondering whether it is ever possible to say anything well. Our forms of speech, our very voices, seem to bleed what we have to say of half its life.

Sometimes of course we have the experience of feeling that our language is adequate to our situation, that the forms of speech available to us, or inventable by us, do what we want them to do, that we have voices we can live with. Many of these occasions are small ones: an exchange of familiar pleasantries on the sidewalk, when we get the tone just right; the sense that a conversation in class has suddenly taken off with a new life and in a new direction, a sense that may last only two or three minutes, and seldom lasts very much longer; or perhaps in writing a paper or giving a talk, when we strike a sentence that seems to us fixed and right, a sentence we can lean on. But this is not common anywhere in life and it happens I think more often in ordinary conversation and classroom talk than it does in our professional discourse.

Why should this be?

B.

I think many of the properties of professional discourse—perhaps all of them—arise from our sense of the specialized audience we address, and of ourselves with respect to that audience. In demonstrating our qualifications to speak; in striking one tone rather than another; in the definition of the question we address; and in the assemblage of materials we bring to bear upon it; in all of this we seek to meet, or perhaps con-

found, our audience's expectations. Our articles and books are affirmations of the specialized discourse in which they are written, and beyond that of the specialized community to which they are addressed. This is in fact how fields or disciplines, which are really best thought of as communities of discourse, are constructed and maintained.

And of course this is not altogether a bad thing. In writing about Thucydides, say, it is important to be able to write on the assumption that your audience know Greek, and are familiar with the text, or that they can find the references that you make; similarly, in writing about law, it is important to be able to speak to those who can tolerate legal citations or the use of a term of art like "jurisdiction." Knowledge can advance only to the degree that it can be presumed in one's audience.

But while the existence of specialized audiences might explain the existence of specialized discourses, it does not explain the deadness or sterility of those discourses, nor does it tell us how to give them life.

I cannot wholly explain this phenomenon either, but I do think that there is something about our conception of professionalism—perhaps it has to do with the false use of science as a model of thought and discourse—that leads us to speak and write in ways that are false to the character of our own intellectual lives. I believe, that is, that we actually lead far richer and more complex lives, including professional lives, than one who knew us only through our professional writing would ever guess. We read more widely than our citations reflect; we think more variously than our arguments suggest; we pursue questions in ways that are more fully our own than we reveal; our relations with prior texts are more rich and interesting than our bibliographic notes, in their often misleading claims to represent what we have read and thought about, are likely to suggest. (Suppose our references were not to the literature we think we are supposed to have read but to the texts we actually have read, and thought about, and wish to respond to: How different would our writing be, in voice and sense of audience, in shape and tone?) We have intellectual lives of mystery and puzzle, excitement and meaning, that are systematically bleached or obliterated by the formal styles of professional discourse. Yet all too often we write in ways that confirm and perpetuate that discourse, granting it authority over us and our minds.

One result of our adherence to the forms, voices, styles of our respective professional communities is a kind of double segmentation, both of the culture and of the individual mind. Separate communities of discourse are established, which seem to have nothing to say to one another, or no way of saying it; in this sense the culture is divided. And since none of us is wholly defined by his or her professional discourse—we are all of us in this sense multi-lingual—there is a kind of corresponding internal segmentation, a division of our own experience, of our minds. Boundaries are thus drawn both among various professional or public

forms of speech—horizontally, if you will—and vertically too, between our professional speech and the ways we talk in the rest of life.

We must not stop writing to each other, and ought not stop writing in ways that are more accessible to some audiences than to others. And no one would recommend the purely personal voice, which would be as empty in its way as the purely professional one is. But can we find ways to talk that will reflect more fully what we know to be true of ourselves, our minds, our language, and our cultures? Can we find voices that are more fully our own, speaking to audiences more fully recognized as the minds and people they actually are?

Or, to put it in the terms with which I began: What might it mean to integrate, to put together in a complex whole, aspects of our culture, or of the world, that seem to us disparate or unconnected, and in so doing to integrate, to bring together in interactive life, aspects of our own minds and beings that we normally separate or divide from each other? What kind of lives could we make for ourselves, what kind of communities with others?

III.

To think of this in terms of our own lives and writing, we can ask: How are we to engage in our own version of the activity of integration and transformation that the poet exemplifies, the activity that our own work so often impedes or denies? For many the first response is to think in terms of our segmented intellectual culture, the split-up academic world, and to try to address it through interdisciplinary work. This is especially common for the lawyer, who turns to one discipline or another in the hope that it will offer him what he feels his own to lack. But how are we to do this? How are we to imagine, how talk about, what we are trying to do?

A.

When we look to the languages that are normally used to describe such activities we find that they are full of difficulty. Take, for example, the common talk of "breaking down boundaries" or "establishing connections" between "fields"—as though there were entities out there in the world, perhaps like the patchwork quilt of agricultural fields we see beneath us as we fly over southern England, among which connections—perhaps in the forms of wires, or pipes, or ditches—could be established. But what is this territorial metaphor of the "field" or "boundary"? And what can be meant by "connections"? It is all most unclear.[3]

A somewhat more developed language for conceiving of, and talking

[3] Perhaps the "field" is to be thought of as a force field, like those created by a magnet that forces a chaotic assembly of iron filings into an array between its poles. This image does catch some of the aggressiveness of modern academic life and its division of the world into those who act and

about, cross-disciplinary work is that of "findings." The idea is that the "findings" of one field should be made available to others, as though history or economics or philosophy, say, should pass a plate with the truth on it over to the law, which would then in some unspecified way put it to use. But this is of course far more difficult than such locutions suggest. In the first place, the image of the world created by one of these disciplines is not monolithic but full of variety and tension, not so much a set of established propositions as a set of questions and methods. The results of such work are normally not "findings" in any simple sense of the word but tentative conclusions in a series of tentative conclusions, elaborated topics for argument and discussion of a certain kind. A discipline can for many purposes in fact be defined as a community of discourse organized around its disagreements, its ways of disagreeing, as well as its agreements. And even where a field does establish a particular view of the world, it does so only from its own point of view—its purposes and aims, its prior questions, and senses of method—and this makes the simple translation of findings impossible.

Consider, for example, the attempt of the law to rely upon the "findings" of psychiatrists as to the "sanity" of criminal defendants. While it is not true that the psychiatrists have nothing useful to say to the law—not at all—it is true that their "findings" are not very usable by the law, for the reason that the two systems of discourse, and the two communities, operate on such radically opposed premises. Psychiatry thinks in terms of treatment and diagnosis and health; the law thinks in terms of guilt, blame, and punishment. There is a radical incompatibility between the discourses, between the conceptions of the human subject and the speaker's relation to him or her, that makes any transfer of "findings" problematic, to say the least, and renders the conversations in which that is attempted—recorded for us in courtroom transcripts—confused in ways that are at once highly comic and deeply tragic.[4] Or suppose it were established to the satisfaction of the psychological community that one group of human beings, defined by certain inheritable characteristics, scored less well on certain tests of mental facility than did another such group. The psychologists could, I suppose, tell us very little about the value of the particular set of mental facilities that they tested for and nothing at all about the social consequences that might properly be thought to flow from this fact.

These are of course rather extreme examples but I think they establish a truth that applies in other cases as well, even at the other end of the spectrum. Think for example of the use of expert economic testimony, say on market share or the effects of a particular administrative decision, where the law explicitly invokes economic criteria. Even there, as every

those who are acted upon. But what relations could exist between such "fields," other than dominance, subjection, or indifference?

[4] *See, e.g.*, Washington v. United States, 390 F.2d 444 (D.C. Cir. 1967).

practicing lawyer knows, the law does not, and cannot, simply sit back and let the experts tell us their "findings": the lawyer who participates in such a case must train herself in the presuppositions of the discipline, the hypotheses upon which the whole edifice rests, the kinds of tentativeness necessarily built into the conclusions, and so on. To prepare a witness of her own or to cross-examine the witness of another, the lawyer must in fact become something of an expert herself, in arguing to judge, jury, or hearing examiner, and she must be prepared to educate her audience into expertise as well. As lawyers we cannot simply accept the conclusions of others; we must make them our own, and to do that we must move out of the legal culture and into the other one. In doing this we are not picking up "findings," but learning a language.

Still more advanced than the language of "findings" is that of "intellectual method." The idea here is that one learns from another discipline not its "findings," but its methodology, which can be brought like a machine to problems in one's own field, upon which it will go to work without itself undergoing any transformation. Thinking again of the law, this is the way that some people talk about the use of literary or critical theory, or philosophical hermeneutics; as though one simply learned an interpretive or critical technique or methodology and then turned to the law and put it to work. But the concerns of the literary critic are quite different from those of the lawyer and any meaningful comparisons must take place by a process of translation that is based upon rather full knowledge of the practices that define each community—and at the level of particularity and not merely at the level of theory or technique. Similarly, a certain branch of economics has been proposed to the law as the machine that will solve all its problems, this time with the power relations reversed: instead of the methodology being subordinated to the preexisting concerns of the lawyer, the claim is made that the method of economics can simply supplant law. But in either case the idea is of a discipline as a technology: you learn to run the machine of literary or economic analysis, then you wheel it up to the new object, called the law, and it goes to work, spitting out results as a log chipper spits out wood chips.

These are at bottom images of interdisciplinary work either as territorial spread or conquest, in which one "field"—or its inhabitants—simply absorbs or takes over another, or as a kind of mechanics. All of them assume that when you put two things together only one is in any meaningful way changed.

B.

This kind of talk is rooted, I think, in our false contemporary metalanguages about knowing, learning, and talking. Take, for example, our standard language of "communication": the idea is that I have in my head some idea or perception or fact which I wish to get across to you; if

I am successful, you will end up at the end of the process with exactly what I had in my mind, or at least a reasonable facsimile thereof. This is a model not only of expression, but of knowledge, and the acquisition of knowledge, and the institutionalization of knowledge too. I acquire bits of knowledge from experience and from others, which I then sort into various categories, where they are then available for communication to others. It is the organization of such bits of knowledge that makes up what we call a "field"; and the university is nothing but an assemblage of such fields.

This is not only false to our experience of language and learning and talking, it creates an incoherent image of our collective intellectual life. If the university is to have a character of its own as a social and intellectual world, there must be some way of organizing these fields into a whole. But what could it be? This is the point at which we find it natural to speak about "connections," "bridges," the transmission of "findings" from one field to another, and the application of the "technology" of one discipline to the problems of another. It is all a bureaucratic, objectifying, and nominalizing vision of the world, operating on a cluster of related metaphors which ultimately imagine organization in terms of territories or machines and which are wholly inadequate to real intellectual lives and communities.

What is most obviously missing from this mechanistic picture of the world is the individual human mind. In this image of life, people are inquirers and processors of knowledge, which they organize into structures. But how is this done? What is the life of the inquiring and investigating mind? What would happen if we began to think of what we do as if each of us were an independent mind, defining and pursuing questions of its own, motivated by interest and curiosity, by a sense of importance or urgency? This is to suggest that we think experientially, or phenomenologically, about human beings as human beings rather than as parts of machines. This leads us to a different conception of the intellectual community and of the conversational process by which it is maintained. For none of us acts alone: our minds, our questions, our sense of what needs to be said, of what can be said, are all shaped by interaction with others; and our aims are not statable in terms of attainable "goals," but in the kind of inquiring and conversing life we hope to make possible for ourselves and for others.

Suppose, then, we were to think of our minds as minds, and our selves as engaged with the perpetual questions: How to think? What to think? What to say and how to say it? What are "fields" to such a mind, and how real are the "boundaries" between them? How are we to talk about, how imagine, what we are doing when we talk to each other across these lines? If you think of fields not as terrains or machines, but as communities of discourse, groups of people defined by their willingness to talk in certain ways, the question becomes: What kind of rela-

tionships can we establish among these various ways of talking, and the communities they define? In so doing, what larger community can we create?

IV.

As a way of thinking about the possibilities suggested by that question I would like now to turn to the relations between two "fields" I know something about, law and literature. I want to put aside both the "findings" conception of interdisciplinary work—which here mainly consists of using literature to establish truths about the inhumanity of law—and the "technology" conception—which here mainly consists of using the terminology developed in the current critical theory debates to carry on preexisting arguments about the way legal texts should be interpreted. Instead I want to ask how they might be put together in such a way as to change both and make a third.

In doing this I shall speak about what I have attempted to do in my own work, as a way of representing one mind's efforts to put things together in a certain way.

When I went to law school from doing graduate work in English Literature, I was startled to discover how similar the two enterprises were, and similar in ways that seemed to be generally unremarked. I had expected to be at an enormous disadvantage compared with people who had studied political science or economics, but I discovered that I was not, for the habits of close reading and textual analysis that I had developed as a reader of literature were in fact very close to those required by legal training. This circumstance, I think, led me to think about the law as a kind of literature and my first book, *The Legal Imagination*, was aimed at working that idea out. My initial question was: What happens if we look at the literature of the law as if it really were literature, as though it defined speakers and a world, a set of possibilities for expression and community? Edmund Wilson in a famous essay gave a reading of Emily Post's *Etiquette* as though it were a novel: What happens if you read the law as if it is a novel? The context in which I asked this question was a course for law students, and there it is easy to make the answer seem disastrous: the law can be made to seem a dead, bureaucratic, overconceptualized, unfeeling language if any is, and the question can be brought home to the future lawyer with some vividness: What does it mean to devote your life to speaking such a language, in such forms, and with such voices?

The point of my comparison of law with literature, despite what I have just said, is actually not to maintain that literature is superior to law but to help the reader see that law can be regarded as a literary activity, and that so regarded it affords the composing mind, and the community more generally, a range of opportunities that ordinary life lacks. Looked at as a piece of interdisciplinary work, then, the aim of this book is not to

"connect fields" but to transform our sense of law by putting it together with something else: to see it as a compositional process, as a set of activities by which minds use language to make meaning and establish relations to others. This is to suggest the possibility of integration at the individual level too, for from this point of view an essential part of the task of the lawyer, and of the judge, can be said to be the establishment of a voice of his or her own in the law, a way of speaking that is both professionally excellent and individually authentic—indeed I think it cannot be the former unless it is the latter.

But how about literature? Is our sense of it transformed too when we put it together with the law? This is a question that motivated my next work, *When Words Lose Their Meaning*. Here the idea was to reverse the flow of *The Legal Imagination*, and to read "literature" as if in some sense it were law. This, it turned out, involved directing attention to three places in the text. The first step is to identify in works of literature, history, and philosophy the set of resources of speech and thought, the cultural inheritance, that is analogous to what we call the law: to that body of cases, statutes, and other precedents that define a lawyer's situation by offering him certain occasions upon which, and certain materials with which, to speak (and by denying him others). In a sense, that is, we are all like lawyers, for we all act out of a particular linguistic inheritance and in a particular rhetorical situation, both of which can be subject to critical analysis and judgment. The first questions that "reading as a lawyer" leads me to ask of another text, then, are: What is the cultural and linguistic inheritance out of which the writer functions? What is the social circumstance, the rhetorical position, out of which he speaks? These obviously lead to other questions as well: How can this inheritance and these circumstances best be described, and how, if at all, can they be judged? In what respects, for example, are they constraining or enabling? This starts us off on a process of cultural criticism.

But none of us simply replicates the materials of our culture in our speech or in our conduct, we act upon and modify our languages all the time. The lawyer again represents, in somewhat exaggerated form, a universal human condition, for while she uses her materials she is always arguing for their reformation. In general terms what this means is that we can ask not only what a speaker's inheritance is, but how, by what art, and to what end, she modifies it. This is a form of aesthetic criticism.

The third focus of attention suggested by "reading as a lawyer" is the set of relations we enact in our speech, relations both with our audience and with those other people we talk about. This is again a feature of speech that is exaggeratedly clear for lawyers, who are required to address each other, and judges, in certain highly stylized ways, and clear too for the law more generally, which establishes fundamental relations among actors in our polity. But something like it is true whenever one person speaks to another. We all know what it is like to be patronized,

flattered, manipulated, or, on the other hand, spoken to directly and honestly, in a way that recognizes our autonomy and freedom, and we know that the relations we create in our talking can be analyzed and judged. This is a form of ethical and political criticism.

I see the lawyer, then, as engaged in a set of linguistic and literary activities, just as the poet or novelist is, just as the priest, the politician, and ordinary citizen are. Likewise, I see the poet or novelist, the politician, priest, and ordinary citizen, as engaged in certain forms of political and ethical discourse—of "legal" discourse—just as the lawyer is, and on all sides whether they know it or not. The aim of the comparison is to see each in a new way by placing it next to the other, and in so doing to make something new that comprises both. The relation between law and literature is not the transfer of "findings" from field to field, nor the transportation of "method," thought of as a kind of intellectual machine that can go to work on new subjects without itself being modified, but a bringing to consciousness of the nature of our own intellectual and linguistic practices, both literary and legal, with the hope of holding them in the mind at once in such a way as to change our sense of both.

The kind of comparison I mean need not be made with literature, and need not be as general as this. To think of it in curricular terms, for example, and to continue to think of the law, I could imagine a course not in law *and* history, or sociology or economics or anthropology, but law *as* each of those things. Our initial question would be: How is this writer of a legal text functioning, whether he knows it or not, as an historian, sociologist, anthropologist? And of course the direction could be reversed, and we could ask: How is this anthropologist or historian, say, functioning as a lawyer? In both cases the hope would be to bring together in the mind at once two systems of discourse, two sets of questions and methods and motives, with the aim of making new texts that would incorporate both, not to merge them into one but to recognize their differences as we sought their similarities. We would hope, for example, to reflect in what we say the ways in which the lawyer is a practical and moral actor in the world, whose speech is a speech of power; and the ways in which, on the other hand, his lack of power of this kind creates a difficulty and an opportunity for every poet, every critic. We would put ourselves in the position of translators, those who know that what is said in one language cannot simply be set over into another without loss or gain and who therefore conceive of their task as the creation of new compositions that will establish mutually respectful relations between them.

As we made such attempts, we should gradually find ourselves more fully able to reflect in our own speech what we know as individual minds to be true of ourselves, our minds, our languages, and our audiences. The process of integration, that is, should take place both at the cultural level, where two discourses are placed together to make a third way of talking, and at the level of the individual mind, as we put together parts

of ourselves that we normally separate to make new voices for ourselves—and, as we talk together, new communities of discourse.

To do this we need to find ways to hold in our minds at once different vocabularies, styles, and tones—different discourse systems—not to merge them but to integrate them, that is, to place them in balance with each other, in order to make, in our talk and our teaching and in our writing, texts that have some of the life of poetry.

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I have been speaking largely out of a sense of dissatisfaction: dissatisfaction with the languages I see available for my use, and with my own relation to them, with the forms of discourse I find myself using, with the conversations I engage in and observe, with the voices I hear myself and others using, with the texts and communities we make. This dissatisfaction is especially acute with specialized professional discourses, especially in the academic world, but it is not confined to those. More generally it is with a bureaucratized culture, one that reduces human actors to very narrow roles, human speakers to very thin speech. For me the best response is what I have called integration and transformation, the attempt to put together parts of our culture, and corresponding parts of ourselves, in ways that will make new languages, voices, and forms of discourse possible. Part of this can take the form of "interdisciplinary work," but only of a certain kind; and the crossing of disciplinary boundaries is not essential to what I am talking about.

What in my view *is* essential is that we should insist upon seeing the world as made up of people talking to each other. For me the fundamental image of life is not that of economic production and exchange, nor that of knowledge acquisition and transfer, but that of composition: people seeking to make texts that will establish meanings and relations with others. We should conceive of the relevant world as a world of people speaking to each other across their discourses, out of their languages, out of their communities of knowledge and expertise, and speaking as people seeking to be whole. We should try to write that way ourselves.

The direction of thought I recommend is thus in large part introspective: we should direct our attention towards the practices we all engage in all the time, with the object of making them more self-conscious, and therefore amenable to more complete understanding and modification. The object of this kind of work can be defined partly in terms of voice: Can we find a wider range of voices, of ways of being, in our writing and offer a wider range to others? Can we be, for example, less assertive, or less continually assertive, more open and tentative and suggestive in our style? Can we find voices of our own that will reflect more fully what we know to be true of ourselves, our minds, our languages, and our cultures?

The object can also be defined in terms of the text itself, of the text

we make, and here I return to the conception of poetic integration with which I began: Can we learn to produce texts that are more "integrated" in the sense that in them we put two things—two systems of discourse, two sets of practices—together in such a way as to make a third that transforms our sense of both? Can we become more fully conscious of what we, and our languages, leave out, and find ways to reflect that consciousness in our speech? Can we find ways to connect the way we talk professionally with the ways we talk in ordinary life? The object is not the connection of fields but integration: the integration of parts of our culture, and parts of ourselves, into new wholes.

Of course these new wholes would not be units or integers but compositions, and the kind of integration of self and culture that is possible for us is not permanent but temporary: it must be achieved over and over again as we assemble fragments into new orders, each of which has within it the principles of tension and disorder. The clarification of life achieved by a poem, as Frost reminds us, is not permanent and absolute but temporary and incomplete: a "momentary stay against confusion."

What would happen if we took this as a prescription for our own work?

One consequence is that others would find what we wrote difficult to read. They would find it hard to understand what we wrote as history, or as law, or as literary theory; they would find that what we said did not fall neatly into focus given their present lenses, that parts were too near and parts were too far away; they would want to reduce or translate what we produced into other terms, to locate it in contexts not of our making, which they would feel would explain it. But if we wrote well our insights would not be portable, nor our texts readily outlined or skim-read. When people asked us to be explicit in saying what we "mean," we would have to prepare ourselves, and them, for disappointment, since the language of explicit statement denies many of the ways we hope our texts will have meaning. We would hope to speak in ways that could not readily be translated into the propositional and assertive forms that are second nature to the academic world; for instead of integrating diversity, such forms collapse the possibilities of speech to a single rather monotonous plane, in which it is indeed hard to tell the truth.

What is more, since each of us would be engaged in independent and introspective work, we would be perpetually rediscovering, or reinventing, many of the most basic truths of human life. Others would say that we were wasting our time, "reinventing the wheel." But this would be a merit, not a fault, for the most fundamental truths about human nature and life must be discovered afresh by each of us, and discovered over and over again, because it is our nature to dilute and forget them.

We would speak out of a consciousness of our language and its limits, of our social circumstances and its limits, with the object of bringing our fragmented culture together in coherent ways in our own minds, and

in doing so, of bringing parts of ourselves together in coherent ways. The hope would be to establish a world of people speaking to each other as whole minds.

The center of attention would always be on the individual as a writing or composing mind, putting into shape and order his or her responses. We could not be a Movement, for the language of movements, necessarily simplifying, reductive, and technological, is inconsistent with all of this. We would have to accept our situation as individuals, speaking to individuals, out of our situations, with as much truth and urgency as we could manage, and be ready to accept responsibility for the integrity and coherence of our compositions and of our voices.

To think of this in terms of our teaching, our focus would be upon intellectual life as practice and activity; upon the nature of whole-minded engagement and whole-minded speech, as we found it in texts we read and as we struggled to attain it ourselves. We would hope above all that our students would take satisfaction in assuming responsibility for what they say and what they become, in an enactment of the kind of maturity that is essential to democracy.

Our speech would be poetic not in the usual sense, for we would not write verse, but in another sense, for we would always be trying to put two things together in such a way as to make a third; and in the process we would change ourselves, and offer change to others, making poems of our own in our classrooms, in our curriculum, in our conversations with each other.