of art that has been." The postmodernist approach has critical implications: namely, that in a society saturated and dominated by mass media, popular culture and fashion are better able than the sacred pretensions of the avant-garde to provide the visual metaphors for the dilemmas of the everyday.

But some people argue, as Diane Crane does, that the cultural eclecticism promoted by postmodernism is itself the expression of a crisis of meaning, arising from the phenomenon of information being produced more rapidly than meaning systems can integrate and synthesize. What is missing from postmodernism is a genuine attempt to innovate and integrate. Lacking this potential, many postmodern expressions are satisfied with either pure entertainment value, or sinister provocation. Thus, the paintings of Eric Fischl and Robert Longo are full of violence, explicit sexuality, and a sense of undefined catastrophe designed to amuse and provoke the public.

According to Crane, the only art style that is at the vanguard of innovation is Pattern painting, for reasons that are both sociological and aesthetic. Pattern painting is a movement that is primarily dominated by women, who have traditions beyond those of the avant-garde. The system is not just that of systems of modern art. Because artists like Judy Chicago and Minnino Shapiro attempt to reclaim feminine subjectivity, there is a psychological and political content to their art that is noticeably missing from other groups.

Crane's book is a "sociology of art" constructed in a fairly conventional mode--but it does have a number of useful things to say about the contemporary arts and artists which are both pertinent and welcome, especially because they throw light on the reasons why the courage, audacity and innovation that were the original virtues of the avant-garde are now in decline. In some sense Seigel's Bohemian Party and Crane's Transformation of the Avant-Garde speak to a similar issue. Crane blames the institutionalization of the artist within the university, as well as the spectacular growth of the art market and the infusion of massive funds into the art world by corporate and governmental institutions, for causing what had been a willfully exclusive and modernist avant-garde into the mainstream of popular culture. In a complementary way, Seigel recognizes that it is difficult for the avant-garde to survive without a subcultural enclave that shelters and encourages adversarial expression.

Bohemia has its posers, its frauds and its misfits who overwhelmingly outnumber the serious artists, but it did offer an alternative community which<br><br>provided itself in its unconventionality and its newfound independence. Bohemia and the avant-garde needed each other. Not only did they shackle the complicity of society, but they made something so profoundly faith. In our postmodernist interregnum both the artist and the intellectual, as Russell Jacoby has recently argued, have lost the quirkiness and solemn sense of anti-values that were once found inside Bohemia. Such qualities are more difficult to express both within the bourgeoisie academic, and from the hypostatized major mass culture, which turned the eccentric forms of bohemian lifestyles into commodified expressions.

The eclipse of Bohemia and the avant-garde is closely bound to the emergence of a new moment in late-capitalist modernism. Modernism was proud of the demands it made on its audiences. Now the public, having fully integrated the aesthetic tricks of modernism, lives on its borrowed images. A portrait of this trend is the transformation of history into an innumerable electronic present: self-enclosed, pre-emptive and fully artificialized. If postmodernism of any kind, postmodernist in any case, is play to a<br><br>critical creative role the then pre-iconoclastic modernism brings to the table on the basis of the excess demand put on the educational system by the forces of liberalism and individualism. Higher education in particular is troubled by the conflict between popular democratic tendencies and the "internal" functions of the universities, the training of professors, and social elites. Neoconservatives claim that post-war educational reforms and the beneficial influence of Deweyan progressivism have watered down educational standards; while intellectual conservatives maintain that the modern liberal intellectual which ultimately leads to the destruction of community. In treating all values as equal, it fails to discern the distinction between good and evil, worthy and worthless. Characterized by a pervasive "openness" which accepts all without any rank order, American political thought degenerates into an undiscriminating pluralism, which diverts politics into factionalism and social fragmentation. Modern pluralism, argues Bloom, views the policy as the commitment of a disparate set of interests. It lacks any notion of a common public good.

If the modern policy is discredited, this is not a defect in the disorder of the soul. For Bloom, as for Plato, an ideal order is ordered. The higher rational part must govern and restrain the appetites. The soul that drives the soul must be shaped, modernized and directed in its true end, the good. This is the task of education. Not all, however, are capable of the proper ordering of the soul; they must be directed in other ways, by harnessing the will or the appetite in socially harmonious ways. Modern culture does not engender the orderly shaping of eros. The modern family has lost the sense of piety and respect of the traditional family—though Bloom's notion of the traditional family has not real correlate in historical experience, it is more a fragment of his conservative imagination. Bloom views the famil<br>ily as a place where traditional institutions are formulated. The moral argument, however, is a defense of the family's role in the home and attention to their care. The personal life, control of the family age of integration of family various versus effective ways to train the passion and inculcate the lack the striving for desire and education. "Bloom links desire and authority in Bloom's account of the modern society is not limited to secularization. In a surveying of the history of the culture and politics of the middle section of the burden of responsibility for understanding the role of religious and moral authority. Bloom (through his nationalism with which society is seen as the creation of a nation-state, one that is uniquely different from others) is trying to maintain a balance between the otherologies and the social fragmentation. Modern pluralism, argues Bloom, views the policy as the commitment of a disparate set of interests. It lacks any notion of a common public good.

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ily as a place where moral authority is transmitted through religious ritual and ceremony. The moral unity of the family, however, is undermined by the wave of feminism which frees women from the home and attenuates men’s dedication to their careers. Besides fragmenting personal life, contemporary conceptions of the family go against nature. The disintegration of family life also has irreversible effects on children. Without proper training their souls are devoid of passion and incapable of education. They lack the striving for wholesomeness that links desire and education. Here, predictably, Bloom’s links desire for order and authority rather than to freedom. Bloom’s account of the decay of modern society is supported by a critique of secularization. In a long and free-wheeling survey of the disengagement of culture and politics, which constitutes the middle section of the book, Bloom points out the burden of responsibility on rationalization of stepping away the metaphysical/religious grounds for political and moral authority. Rationalist (read secular) thought has replaced religion and metaphysics in the home, a condition from which sees thinking and acting as the creation of a solitary subject.

Political modernity begins with Max Scheler, who-substitutes politics for the soul and continues with the transformation of value into self-interest. When still tied to the Protestant ethic, however, self-interest is a redeeming moment of grace in the political theory of Locke. Locke’s moral politics are based on the idea that an individual’s self-interest interest is for Bloom, the basis of the American polity so admired by the libertarian right.

Locke’s political solution, however, is unusable. It cannot fully contain the forces of secularization and the subjectivization of culture. The romantic quest for unity and speminity represents, for Bloom, the flip-side—the dark side—of bourgeois culture, and this reinforces the tendencies toward a subjectivist interpretation of the self. The continuing disintegration of the world has led to the rejection of nature as a teleological order. Freedom comes to be understood as pure activity. The romantic notion of culture does try to introduce moral order as a counter to disenchantment. But this substitute for religion breaks down. It loses its original universal reference and becomes exemplified in a plurality of cultures grounded in “rootlessness” and “otherness.”

The terminus of modern rationalization is found in Nietzsche who, according to Bloom, holds that reason’s disenchantment of the world is the source of its own dissolution. Although reason undermines religion it is incapable of finding its own foundation. Reason requires the abandonment of rationalism. For Adam, reason would seem to undermine Bloom’s own position, based as it is on a form of classical rationalism. However, Bloom has posed the problem and extends his critique to modern education. Influenced by (primarily German) ideas of value-relativism and subjectivity, modern intellectuals have lost sight of the true purpose of the university. They teach the equality of values, and treat value choices as an infinite array of decisions. Human activity becomes infinite and creativity without respect for its necessary limits and awareness of the necessity of pure freedom.

Far from being a refuge for great minds, the university is demonized. It is the threat of democracy both in the university and in society which Bloom sees as the most. According to Bloom, democracy exemplifies interest detached from reason. It represents only mass opinion, and follows the concerns and fashions of the times, not the permanent truths of the cosmos. Bloom lps view service to democracy, but denies that collective deliberation in the basis for rational judgment. Bloom’s concerns extend to socially disadvantaged groups as well. He can barely conceal his resentment against those who assert their own needs or desires against the supposed harmony of the world. Bloom’s tragic lesson for the face of modernity contains its element of force. “His” solution to the dilemma of disenchantment is to a military incitement to the ghost of lost souls. Like the neo-conservatives, he takes the marks of Marc Weber’s theory of rationalization and attempts to read back into it conclusions that the theory cannot hold. While Weber concluded that the power of religion to integrate society, culture and economy into a whole is inevitably lost in the transition from religion/ metaphysical to modern worldviews, Bloom simply posits an other that is a religious need that can be fulfilled only by returning to the traditional solutions of the sacred. No grounds are given for this argument, nor does it seem to follow from the implications of secularization. It is a dogmatic assertion implicit throughout Bloom’s book. The conservative critique of modern culture presumes that there can be no moral entity without a religious consciousness. There is, however, no reason to rule out a secu- lar or non-traditional conception of social solidarity—a notion internal to social life itself.

Bloom’s analysis of secularization equates modern rationality with a kind of instrumental reason—one which leads to subjectivism and relativism. While Bloom may have touched on some of the pathologies of modern society, he has shown that modernity itself is pathological. Here his analysis confuses cause and effect. The fragmentation of culture is not due to modernity or its form of rationality, but to the effects of a capitalistic modernization. It is this process which selects out and favours the dominance of instrumental rationality, and which is at the root of the alienation of culture. Bloom, however, wants to convert a social process into one that occurs mainly in the heads of intellectuals. Misguided intellect- lucts are at the core of the problem.

The ultimate effect of Bloom’s pro- posal is to invalidate the experience of students. The conservative theory of human nature and the hierarchical ordering of the soul that Bloom proposes, impose an order on the desires and drives of individuals based not on the potentialities of social life, but on an historical metaphysics which conceals its own ideological basis. The alienation and devolution of experience leaves the student open to manipulation under the guise of tutelage supposedly based on the interests of reason. These best interests, however, restrict the student’s own potential to find happiness and solidarity in relation with others.

This tactic is evident in Bloom’s book. The reader is constantly told that students are incapable of judging what is good for them. They must be led to the truth by master (and primarily male) teachers. In Bloom’s view the skill of the teacher lies not in a capacity for rational persuasion, or productive dialogue with students, but in erhexs performance. The erotic power of the teacher is aroused and stimulated by the rap desire of virgin students to be filled with the master’s power. This interpretation of eros seems less like the dance of lovers than the last tango of erotic domination. Based on power rather than concern for the other, it places the performance of the teacher at the centre of the process.

For those of us who do not view educa- tion as a process of Bildung, Bloom’s view may strike us—with good reason—as perverse. The act of teaching requires a respect for the independence of learners and a willingness to listen and be educated. In a similar way the notion of culture used by conservatives is not, as Bloom seems to think, a “single coherent object” created by gods or geniuses, one which restricts and dominates an unevi- lized everyday life. Far from being the solution to the educational problems of today, The Closing of the American Mind is a symptom of the depth of the crisis.

Brian Catecinos underwent considerable education most recently at the University of Toronto. There he had a chance to observe Allan Bloom first hand. Cur- rently, he holds the Walter Benjamin folding chair at a library near you.

Gender and Expertise
Edited by Marren McNeil

Women have always had a lot to say about scientific rationality. But their observations have taken many different forms. In 1792, long before there was an organized women’s movement, Mary Wollstonecraft argued that the inferior position of women resulted from the fact that most women did not have access to education. A true daughter of the Enlightenment, she believed that the position of women would improve only when they had the means to become as ‘ra- tional’ as men.

This theme has been voiced in femi- nist writings as recent as those of Simone de Beauvoir, who believed that women, being closer to their ‘animality’, were prevented from transcending their immedi- ate situation and thereby entering the world of cultural creativity.

Unfortunately, in the years since, the scope of the debate has become broader and more complicated. Feminist ap- proaches to rationality and science are more heterogeneous and diverse. They emanate from a number of sources in- cluding those women engaged in practi- cal struggles, such as the women’s health movement, to women involved in academic endeavours; the latter consist no- tably of feminists taking a deconstructive approach to the gendered metaphar- matics that mark Western thought.

Nevertheless, few feminists have managed to disentangle themselves from the association of women with nature; fewer still have stopped to problematize such slippery conceptions as rationality, expertise or technology.

Liberal feminists have, for the most part, pursued Wollstonecraft’s concern about women’s access to the professions and trades traditionally dominated by men. For them the one problem with expertise is how to get more of it. And it is in part due to their efforts that the number of options available to women has greatly expanded—particularly for middle and upper class women. But these so-called equity projects stop short of questioning the gendered relations of power through which expertise is de- fined.

In an interesting, if predictable twist, liberal feminists have also been active at important sites of popular struggle where gender and expertise have been the focus of theoretical work, namely the women’s