

WHAT IS OUR “CANON”? HOW AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORIANS DEBATE THE CORE OF THEIR FIELD*

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“Where is Leo Strauss?”

“Surely, you can’t be serious about not including Theodore Parker!”

“In an earlier edition you had Edmund Wilson, but why is he gone now?”

“Not enough conservatives!”

These selected excerpts from a conversation now running nearly a quarter-century about *The American Intellectual Tradition: A Sourcebook* exemplify the efforts made by specialists in American intellectual history to decide just what constitutes the core of their field.¹ An anthology designed for undergraduates has practical limitations, to be sure, that prevent its table of contents from ever serving as a complete map of a field. Specific research questions, not arguments over canons, properly remain the deepest center of gravity of any cohort of scholars. But assignments to students are one important indicator of what scholar-teachers take to be important, and these assignments are not unrelated to choices these same individuals make about the topics of their monographic contributions. Hence the lively correspondence that my coeditor, Charles Capper, and I have carried on with dozens of colleagues concerning the six editions of the only collection of sources for this field currently in print offers a window on how

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¹ David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper, eds., *The American Intellectual Tradition: A Sourcebook*, 6th edn (New York, 2011), following earlier editions published by the Oxford University Press in 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2006.

American intellectual history has changed in the last generation and what are its current directions.²

Our experience, as I will detail below, indicates that the field of American intellectual history over the course of the last quarter-century has become increasingly focused on political ideas and social theory, and less engaged by philosophy and literary culture. These trends distinguish American intellectual historians from the practitioners of British, French, German, and Russian intellectual history, where philosophy and literary culture retain a centrality they no longer have in the study of the intellectual life of the United States. I will caution here that the turn away from philosophy and literary culture risks cutting off inquiries that are of great value to the profession and to the public that we ultimately serve, especially at a time when the studies carried out under the sign of “cultural history” usually attend to only the most general of philosophical ideas and the most popular of literary works.

The size and angle of the window on the field provided by our experience with the *Sourcebook* is partly determined by a decision Capper and I made in 1986 when we first solicited ideas from colleagues for the first edition (which then appeared in January 1989) which remains in effect. The decision was to make the *Sourcebook* frankly “intellectual” as opposed to “cultural” in the sense that we focus on actual argumentation, on the efforts of historical actors to employ

² Down through the early 1960s the standard collection was a massive hardback volume edited for Lippincott by Merle Curti, Willard Thorp, and Carlos Baker, *American Issues: The Social Record*, 4th edn (Chicago, 1960). This book first appeared in 1941 and was revised and expanded in 1944, 1955, and 1960. It was designed as a partner to a collection of literary texts, *American Issues: The Literary Record*, edited by the same trio of scholars. Henry F. May used *Social Record* in the course he taught at Berkeley for twenty-eight years (assigning only a fraction of its selections), which both Capper and I audited as graduate students there in the 1960s. Another early collection was edited by Henry Steele Commager for Harper & Row, *Living Ideas in America* (New York, 1951). After both *Social Record* and *Living Ideas in America* were out of print, several other collections appeared and remained in print for only a few years. The most ambitious of these was edited for the Free Press by Gerald N. Grob and Robert N. Beck, *Ideas in America: Source Readings in the Intellectual History of the United States* (New York, 1970). All of these collections served as opening inventories of possibilities for *The American Intellectual Tradition*, but each of them approached the field through “snippets,” short selections from longer works enabling extensive coverage but limiting the depth with which any given text could be analyzed. Period-specific collections often offered full-text versions of classic essays, e.g. several edited by Perry Miller on the Puritans, the Transcendentalists, and the thinkers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which were also assigned by May in his courses at Berkeley. These Miller-edited volumes helped to persuade Capper and me of the value of longer selections. Miller’s *American Thought: Civil War to World War I* (New York, 1954) had the most influence on *The American Intellectual Tradition*, as detailed below.

evidence and reasoning for the purpose of convincing a reader of the truth or wisdom of a given claim or cluster of assertions. The texts we reprint are, of course, repositories of attitudes and unarticulated assumptions that the historian (and indeed the student) will interrogate, but our point has never been to provide access to popular values except insofar as these values are present in the writings of people who "made history" by arguing ("intellectuals," as such people began to be called about a century ago). Hence *The American Intellectual Tradition* has taken for granted that intellectual life in America has been embedded in the intellectual life of the larger, north Atlantic West. This orientation has kept the *Sourcebook* somewhat removed from "cultural history," which, as practiced by specialists in the study of the United States, has tended to be more Americo-centric. The bulk of the authors found in both volumes have done their thinking and writing within a transnational frame, drawing upon an inventory of ideas common to philosophers, political theorists, writers, social critics, scientists, theologians, and other intellectuals in the Europe-centered West.

Before I take up the correspondence that is the chief datum for this essay, I want to explain my conviction that when the field of American intellectual history is construed as I have just described, its most commanding theme is the accommodation of Protestant Christianity with the Enlightenment. Not every aspect of the intellectual history of the United States and of its British colonial antecedents can be adequately analyzed in relation to this process of accommodation. But insofar as there is a single, dominant theme from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first, this is it, and Capper and I are not the only people to understand this. Were this vision of the field idiosyncratic, *The American Intellectual Tradition*, organized with this theme in mind, could not have survived for long, and certainly not into its sixth edition. The accommodation of Protestant Christianity with the Enlightenment is, of course, a widely dispersed process, variations of which are found in all societies that inherit the Reformation, including the scattered nations of the British Commonwealth. But there is no question that the United States and its British colonial antecedents have together constituted a conspicuous, multi-century arena for this process. Why this is so invites clarification here.

The huge, pertinent reality is the demographic preponderance of Protestants, especially dissenting Protestants from Great Britain and from German-speaking Europe, during the formative years of the society and long thereafter. The upward mobility of the Catholic population, and the demographic diversification of the United States since the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 produced massive immigration of non-Protestants from Asia, Latin America, and the former Soviet lands, can easily blind our contemporaries to how overwhelmingly Northern European Protestant in origin were the educated classes of the United States until very recently. The long standardized classics of the New England Puritans (Cotton

Mather, Jonathan Edwards, *et al.*) and of the late eighteenth-century Founders (Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, *et al.*) are prominent artifacts of this process visible in early American history. But prominent, too, are the writings of the early nineteenth-century Unitarians, Calvinists, and Transcendentalists. The Darwinian controversy animated many British and some Continental disputes, but a mark of Protestantism's hold on the United States is the peculiar intensity and duration of the "science-and-religion" question. American Protestants of the nineteenth century regarded the Reformation and the development of modern science as mutually reinforcing events; Luther and Bacon, it was often said, were part of the same progressive advance of civilization. American Protestants were schooled to expect reason and revelation to work in harmony and on terms that could be explained to the public by a local pastor. Hence American intellectuals exerted enormous amounts of energy to protect this harmony by liberalizing the content of belief while dealing with the threatening idea that the human beings created in the image of the divine also shared a common ancestor with chimpanzees. Similarly, while the discoveries of biblical scholars about the chronology and authorship of specific scriptures had ceased to be vexing issues for most European intellectuals by the late nineteenth century, in the United States the apparent immersion of sacred texts into "culture" was almost as threatening as the apparent immersion of "man" into "nature" and continued to be a matter of concern well into the twentieth.

The process of accommodation as I have been describing it might be characterized as "cognitive demystification," in that a series of biblically inspired ideas are being critically revised or abandoned in relation to modern, post-Enlightenment standards of cognitive plausibility. To be sure, this somewhat rationalist phrase, "cognitive demystification," might lead one to mistakenly deemphasize the dynamic role of Romanticism in challenging inherited Protestantism—Ralph Waldo Emerson no less than William Ellery Channing led in the early nineteenth century's crucial revision of the Protestant heritage, for example—but the Romantics took for granted that Christianity looked different on account of what critical reason had done to it since the era of Newton and Locke. In the late nineteenth and especially the twentieth century the cognitive demystification and attendant Romantic transformation of traditional religious belief came to be connected with an additional dynamic, and one that distinguishes the United States from Europe just as vividly as does its overwhelmingly Protestant inheritance: demographic diversification.

Catholics and Jews increased not only in numbers, but in their active participation in politics and public discourse generally. American Catholics were long marginalized by a combination of Protestant prejudice, Catholic self-isolation, and weak class position. But as Catholics became more visible in the middle decades of the twentieth century, they functioned to destabilize

Protestant cultural confidence and to render rationalist perspectives more attractive in contrast to what many Protestants saw as the "medieval" mentality of Catholics. Jews were fewer in number, but having much stronger class position and a greater tradition of literacy, proved to be powerful vehicles for Enlightenment universalism. Jewish intellectuals challenged the cultural hegemony of Protestantism and accelerated the process of cognitive demystification associated with scientific advances. By the middle decades of the twentieth century the secularization of the intellectual life of the United States—the particular nation in the north Atlantic West with the highest degree of religious affiliation by far—was being promoted quietly and steadily by an intelligentsia of heavily Jewish origin.

In the sixth edition of *The American Intellectual Tradition*, fourteen of the twenty-six documents written during the quarter-century stretching from 1939 to 1964 are by authors of Jewish origin, many of whom fit T. S. Eliot's legendary complaint that "free-thinking Jews" were a threat to the preservation of a Christian society. This demographic overrepresentation is not the result of our looking for non-Christians, but follows from the simple fact that so many of the American intellectuals whom the field's scholars now agree "made history" with their writings about any and all topics during that period were Jewish. No national culture in the Europe-centered West experienced—simultaneously in the twentieth century—remotely the same measure of inherited Protestant cultural hegemony and remotely the same degree of Jewish in-migration. Hence the theme of Protestantism's accommodation with various elements and legacies of the Enlightenment, which is more popularly associated with an earlier period, is in fact a vital part of American intellectual history throughout the period covered by Volume Two (since 1865) of *The American Intellectual Tradition* as well as that covered by Volume One (1630–1865).

There is much else to the story, including the debates over economy and society common to all capitalist societies and the debates over the meanings of ethnoracial distinctions that mattered more in America than in Europe, but no single theme can be found in more American discursive locations than the accommodation of Protestantism with the Enlightenment, broadly construed. This construction of American intellectual history is not to be confused with another that has often been advanced: the conflict between "head" and "heart." The latter construction is insufficiently specific, historically: it relies on terms too general to provide the traction that a deeply historical analysis requires. Heads and hearts are universal to the human species; the Enlightenment and Protestant Christianity decidedly are not.³

³ For a recent, widely disseminated example of reliance on this overly general set of terms see Garry Wills, *Head and Heart: American Christianities* (New York, 2007).

Within the frame I have just sketched, two realities dominate conversations about the *Sourcebook*. First, colleagues are much more ready to talk about additions than cuts. When someone suggests one or more additions and we then ask him or her for advice on what might be eliminated in order to make room, the default response is silence. There are exceptions to this, as I shall discuss below, but a challenge of editing this *Sourcebook* is getting collegial support for dropping anything that has been “canonized.” Second, the level of agreement about what texts are most important is very high in the earlier periods and diminishes predictably the closer one gets to the present.

In keeping with this second reality, the changes in Volume One are minimal from one edition to the next, and are heavily located in the nineteenth rather than in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nine of the twelve authors—discussed below—whom we have added to Volume One between the first and sixth editions flourished between the 1810s and the 1850s. Of the twenty-seven authors found in the first edition, all but three (Samuel Willard, George Mason, and William Leggett) are still found in the sixth, although in the cases of Roger Williams and Margaret Fuller we have changed from one specific piece of writing to another. Our correspondents have strongly urged us to continue provide them with a clearly recognized canon: a Puritan-centered early period (John Winthrop, Anne Hutchinson, Williams, Cotton Mather, and Jonathan Edwards), a classic “Enlightenment and Founding Era” cast of characters (Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison), an equally classic set of New England Romantics and Transcendentalists (Fuller, Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Herman Melville), a smattering of antebellum nationalists, revivalists, and reformers (Charles Grandison Finney, John Humphrey Noyes, George Bancroft, Catharine Beecher, and Henry C. Carey), and the central voices in the slavery-and-sectional conflict (John C. Calhoun, George Fitzhugh, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln).

Agreement has been more difficult for Volume Two, which covers the period since the Civil War. The bulk of the correspondence has focused on the decades since 1930. This diminution of consensus as we approach the present will surprise no one, but I flag it to explain that the bulk of what I report below concerns only the most recent eighty years of a chronological expanse of more than 380 years for which American intellectual historians are responsible. It is appropriate that I am the coeditor to provide this account. Capper and I do work together on the whole project, conferring with each other about each selection and general principles, but we have a division of labor according to which he takes chief responsibility for Volume One and I for Volume Two. Most of the collegial exchanges about the *Sourcebook* take place in three domains: my own email account, my living room (focus groups of Berkeley graduate students), and the elevators of convention hotels where a glimpse of my nametag generates countless spontaneous, and

often exceedingly valuable comments from colleagues who use the *Sourcebook* in their classrooms. "I'm so glad to meet you because it gives me a chance to tell you that you've got to add George Kennan."

Before I detail these conversations as they have focused on Volume Two, I want to begin with a generalization that applies to both volumes. Interest in two topics—religion and gender—has increased steadily over the years. In Volume One, we gradually added the Unitarian Channing, the antebellum evangelical theologian Nathaniel William Taylor, and the liberal Congregationalist Horace Bushnell. Our decision to replace the Jacksonian writer William Leggett with Orestes Brownson was partly responsive to the desire of colleagues to have something from Brownson in the collection in order to facilitate their teaching about his eventual conversion to Catholicism and, more generally, the early emergence of a Catholic intellectual culture in the United States. We were frequently lobbied to add Theodore Parker—partly because of his crucial role in religious thought, advancing the "higher criticism"—but have been reluctant to overload the contents with New England Transcendentalists and saw no way to diminish the space devoted to Emerson, Fuller, and Thoreau. Also in Volume One, as interest in gender issues increased, we added to Fuller and Catharine Beecher (there from the start) selections by Judith Sargent Murray ("On the Equality of the Sexes"), Sarah Grimké (selection from *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman*), and Louisa McCord ("Enfranchisement of Women"), all strongly post-Enlightenment voices. These sets of changes concerning religion and gender almost exhaust the revisions to Volume One over the course of all the later editions. The few other additions responded to what Capper and I believed to be eminently convincing suggestions for more attention to the Anti-Federalists ("Brutus") and to issues of race and slavery (William Lloyd Garrison and Martin Delaney).

Turning now to Volume Two, religion was represented in the first edition only by Josiah Royce's "Problem of Job," William James's "Will to Believe," and Reinhold Niebuhr's "The Truth in Myths." In the second edition we added a book chapter from the great anti-Darwinist theologian Charles Hodge. We also added the religion-saturated preface to Whittaker Chambers's *Witness*, the anticommunist testament of the 1950s, although Chambers does not so much explore religious issues as invoke religious faith in a political context. We also changed our Niebuhr selection from the theologically intensive sermon "The Truth in Myths" to a chapter from the more frequently cited, politically engaged book *Children of Light and Children of Darkness*. To the third edition we added a chapter from the Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray's pivotal work of 1960, *We Hold These Truths*, which marked more dramatically than any other single text the entry of Catholics into the mainstream of American intellectual life even as Murray castigated the Enlightenment and advanced an Aquinas-centered view of American democracy.

Finding that few colleagues actually assigned Hodge, we dropped him from the fourth edition and, while concerned to respond to needs in other domains, left the religious component of the *Sourcebook* otherwise untouched. We returned to this component aggressively in the fifth edition. For the Darwinian controversy we added Asa Gray's review of *Origin of the Species*, and for more strictly theological disputation we brought in a chapter from Charles Augustus Briggs's 1883 defense of the "higher criticism," *Biblical Study*. We also supplemented Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Solitude of Self" (a feminist, radically rationalistic classic with us from the first edition onward) with several passages from her *Women's Bible*, a little-remembered attack on religious orthodoxy of 1895. We also inserted a 1995 atheistic manifesto of Carl Sagan's. But neither the Stanton nor the Sagan selections played well with our correspondents and in our own teaching, so we dropped both from the sixth edition but added two essays of 1960 by leaders of ecumenical and evangelical Protestantism, respectively Wilfred Cantwell Smith and Harold John Ockenga. We also added a representative of the "new atheist" vogue of very recent years, Sam Harris, who repeats classical Enlightenment criticisms of religion in general and of Protestant Christianity in particular. Hence in Volume Two we have gone, in hit-and-miss fashion, from three to eight (nine if Chambers is counted) selections that directly address religious issues.

A great challenge in improving Volume Two has been deciding how to represent feminist theory. From the start we had Stanton and a chapter from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Women and Economics*, but nothing from the "second wave." This was perhaps the least defensible gap in the first edition, and followed in part from our inability to get consensus among our correspondents. We talked about using the opening section of Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, a pivotal book of 1970, but Millet's most influential pages by far are commentaries on long quotations from Henry Miller's sexually explicit, colloquial prose, which some of our correspondents thought rendered Miller's vulgarities rather than Millet's perspective the likely focus of student attention. We considered a chapter from Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice*, which was being widely discussed at the time, but some resisted this idea vociferously on the grounds that Gilligan served chiefly to reinforce essentialist ideas of gender. Some correspondents suggested Catherine MacKinnon, but others felt that her concerns were too narrowly legal. We eventually chose a section of Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique*—despite some objections that she was "too journalistic" and "insufficiently theoretical"—and two provocative pieces that had been suggested by several of our correspondents: Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience" and a chapter from Evelyn Fox Keller's *Gender and Science*.

Friedan was a popular choice and we retained her, but Rich was not, so for the third edition we replaced Rich with a section of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, which we also wanted for its Foucauldian elements. We stayed with Butler for

the fourth edition while adding an essay by Nancy Chodorow providing a more psychoanalytic perspective. Butler generated complaints to the effect that her argument was elusive, although I had worked carefully with Butler herself to develop an edited text of the opening chapter of *Gender Trouble* that omitted debates with various French theorists of whom few students would have heard. For the fifth edition we replaced Butler and Keller (whose focus on science was felt to be marginal to feminist concerns) with essays by Gloria Anzaldua and Joan Scott.

Yet the selection from Anzaldua's *Borderlands/La Frontera* was said to be obscurantist in prose style and proved even less appreciated than Butler. Scott's "The Evidence of Experience" came across as a considerably more coherent "postmodernist" treatise than Butler, even if less strictly focused on gender. So we kept Scott for the sixth edition and dropped Anzaldua for MacKinnon, whose writings of the 1980s had, after two decades, established themselves as classics of the period. Currently, then, we have Stanton, Gilman, Friedan, Chodorow, MacKinnon, and Scott. Yet we have no doubt that Millett's book of 1970 and Butler's book of 1990 are works of exceptional importance in the development of feminist theory. Their not being included in the 2011 version of the *Sourcebook* is an example of how the character of an undergraduate anthology limits its capacity to represent the field. Everyone agrees that the elaboration of feminist theory is one of the most important developments in the intellectual history of the last fifty years, and we will continue to ponder alternative ways to enable students to engage it. The overwhelming secular character of modern feminist theory, moreover, is yet another indicator of the centrality of the Enlightenment's legacy in American intellectual history.

I will now turn from gender and religion to other topical areas. Agreement concerning debates about racism, antiracism, and the black-white color line was easily achieved. We began with a chapter of W. E. B. Du Bois's *Souls of Black Folk* and with Martin Luther King Jr's "Letter from the Birmingham Jail." King's piece itself is one of American intellectual history's most engaged integrations of Protestant ideas with those of the Enlightenment. Both Du Bois and King have remained in all later editions, although we have alternated several different chapters of Du Bois's book. We have rotated a number of different race theorists in Volume Two, but more for practical reasons than because of disagreements about who is important and who is not. Eager to find a place for Ralph Ellison without using any of his fiction, we added to the Second Edition Ellison's critique of Gunnar Myrdal's *American Dilemma*. Yet the Myrdal book itself—even if written by a Swedish social scientist rather than an American—was what defined the discussion for that era, so we dropped Ellison from the third edition and replaced him with a selection from *American Dilemma*. At that time we also added three other essays in this domain: Malcolm X's "Bullet or Ballot," a chapter of Lillian

Smith's 1949 book, *Killers of the Dream*, and Kwame Anthony Appiah's discussion of the genetics of race from his *In My Father's House*. In the fourth edition we brought Ellison back via his substantial essay of 1977, "The Little Man at Chehaw Station," which had been strongly recommended by several colleagues.

Yet this essay of Ellison's takes up an enormous amount of space, resists editing down, and turned out, some correspondents noted ruefully, to be "over the heads" of many students. No one disputed its analytic power and historical significance, but we pulled it from the fifth edition. This decision provides another example—like Millett and Butler above—of how the character of an undergraduate anthology limits its ability to serve as a map of a field. We also dropped Appiah from the fifth edition because the scientific sources on which Appiah relied had become dated. We also cut Smith, whose autobiographical account of seeing the one-drop rule in action during her girlhood—a white friend was suddenly classified as black and whisked away from her social set—was limited in scope. In place of Appiah and Smith we brought in James Baldwin's "Many Thousands Gone" and the chapter of Henry Louis Gates Jr's *Loose Canons* devoted to the challenge of constructing a canon of African American Literature (which is in some respects a model for this essay of my own for *Modern Intellectual History*).

The Baldwin essay is difficult because it takes the form of a critique of an author few students have read, Richard Wright, yet most of our correspondents continue to find it one of the strongest essays by one of African American intellectual history's true giants, and all the more worth addressing since it appeared as early as 1951. We were attracted to the Gates piece of 1990 not only for chronological balance, but also because it gave us a discussion of literary culture, which, as I explain below, we felt was underrepresented. For the sixth edition we added a 1962 essay by Harold Cruse, whose standing in the history of black nationalist thought had gradually increased over the years and whose writings addressed many more theoretical issues than the more famous Malcolm X. We gained some space at this point by dropping "Bullet or Ballot," which, paradoxically, is easily accessible on the Internet yet carries one of the highest permissions fees when reproduced in print. Colleagues also reported that most undergraduates had read Malcolm X in high school. Hence we now have Du Bois, Myrdal, Baldwin, Cruse, King, and Gates.

The hardest area in which to get anyone to agree to any cuts whatsoever is that of politics. It is emblematic that the writings of all three of the authors we had dropped at one time or another but were then actually obliged by popular demand to bring back into the sixth edition were about political ideas: "reform Darwinist" Lester Frank Ward, radical sociologist C. Wright Mills, and New Deal celebrant David Lilienthal. Here is how it happened. After four editions of Volume Two displaying Ward's progressive social science against William Graham Sumner's

conservative political economy, we thought that in the fifth edition we might gain some space by dropping Ward and counting on a headnote's description of the classic Sumner–Ward debate to suffice. But we got more complaints about that drop decision than any other in our entire experience with the *Sourcebook*. Dropping Mills proved to be almost as unpopular. We had Mills from the start, but when we cut him from the fifth edition to make room for a chapter from Herbert Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* colleagues promptly informed us that Mills was indispensable. We tried Lilienthal in the fourth edition to provide an example of the political thinking associated with the New Deal after ignoring this category in the first and second editions and discovering that Rexford Guy Tugwell, whom we used in the third edition, was found "too boring" by students. But having received little feedback on Lilienthal we dropped him from the fifth edition to experiment with both Thurman Arnold and Henry Wallace. The combination of my own dismal teaching experience with these several New Deal texts and several messages from colleagues that Lilienthal worked better than Arnold ("not on point") and Wallace ("too religious to represent a New Deal voice") convinced us to go back to Lilienthal.

In the meantime, the political- and social-theoretical writings we added from edition to edition by Chambers, Marcuse, Hannah Arendt (from *Origins of Totalitarianism*), W. W. Rostow (from *The Stages of Economic Growth*), Noam Chomsky ("The Responsibility of Intellectuals"), Woodrow Wilson ("The Ideals of America"), Walter Lippmann (from *Drift and Mastery*), George Kennan (from *American Diplomacy*), Michael Walzer ("What Does It Mean to be an American?"), and Henry Luce ("The American Century") were enthusiastically welcomed. We have retained all but Luce (insufficiently theoretical) and Walzer (whose analysis of multiculturalism we decided was less pertinent than Henry Louis Gates Jr's). Yet even within this highly popular topical segment of American thought, we have struggled to find examples of the radical thinking of the 1930s that suit the needs of instructors. We started with Edmund Wilson's 1931 essay "Appeal to Progressives," but in search of something representative of a more radical left tried Meridel Le Sueur's 1934 piece of passionately pro-strike reportage "I Was Marching." This did not generate much feedback, but Capper and I were troubled that it was not as analytical as the style of the *Sourcebook*. We dropped Le Sueur for Sidney Hook's "Why I Am a Communist," which serves, at least, to show students that Marxist thinking in the United States was highly developed. Hook is found "too philosophical" by some of our correspondents, but we have retained him.

At the other end of the ideological spectrum, the objection that Volume Two did not have enough conservatives was a common complaint about our first edition. In keeping with a widespread feeling about the dominance of liberal ideas, that initial edition included selections from Ward, Dewey, Jane Addams,

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr, Randolph Bourne, and Daniel Bell, in addition to the more radical Mills and Thorstein Veblen. Sumner and the Nashville Agrarian leader John Crowe Ransom were our only bona fide conservative political thinkers. Adding Chambers to the second edition, Samuel Huntington (“The Democratic Distemper”) to the third, and Milton Friedman (from *Capitalism and Freedom*) to the fifth were modest steps. Although Woodrow Wilson is often associated with progressive politics, broadly defined, Wilson’s exceedingly Anglo-centric and candidly imperialist essay of 1902, “The Ideals of America,” which we had added at the time of the fourth edition, also helped to remedy this deficiency.

But as we prepared the sixth edition “more conservatives” remained the most frequently voiced suggestion in hotel elevators and email messages. So we added the corporate theorist Peter Drucker (“Innovation—The New Conservatism”) and the libertarian Ayn Rand (“Man’s Rights”). Switching Huntington to his “Clash of Civilizations” also served to broaden the reach of our representatives of conservative thought to a more international dimension. Ockenga, while concerned only with religious ideas, also responds to the need for more conservative voices in the *Sourcebook*. Unlike our experience with religious thinkers, feminist theorists, race-and-color theorists, or radicals, we have never introduced a conservative thinker whom we then later found it wise to drop. No doubt this reflects the striking trend in the field toward more attention to conservative intellectuals, but also a stronger consensus about which conservative thinkers matter the most.

But still no Leo Strauss. Why not? He was often proposed, from the earliest of our correspondence in the late 1980s right down to the present. Many of the colleagues whose advice we sought on the wisdom of adding Strauss cautioned that he was too hard to follow. Others observed that teaching Strauss required so much more explanation from the instructor than was the case with the other conservative thinkers under discussion. Moreover, the question of Strauss was caught up in another, larger issue about philosophy in general.

Philosophy has come to constitute a much smaller segment of the field of American intellectual history than was the case when Perry Miller, Morton White, Merle Curti and, somewhat later, Henry May and John Higham were at their most influential. Of the thirteen thinkers found in Miller’s 1954 collection *American Thought: Civil War to World War I*, five were philosophers (Royce, James, Dewey, Chauncey Wright, and Charles Peirce) and one other, the legal theorist Holmes, was represented by his highly philosophical essay “Natural Law.”⁴ Capper and I had always admired Miller’s collection, and it strongly influenced the first

⁴ Miller, *American Thought*. Miller’s forty-four-page introduction (ix–lii) to this collection, organized around the American reception of Hegel and Darwin, is a convenient example

half of our Volume Two. I began my own career with an intellectual biography of the philosopher Morris R. Cohen, and have always identified strongly with the traditional assumption that philosophy was basic to the field. Behind this assumption is the awareness that in philosophy the accommodation of Protestant Christianity to the Enlightenment is the most visible. So long as one retains this conception of the field, attention to philosophy is all the more appropriate. Moreover, much philosophical writing is relatively straightforward, and thus, contrary to the popular image of philosophy as "difficult," offers students some of the most literal and direct points of access to the issues that intellectuals in general debate with one another. As a pedagogical matter, I find that philosophy texts often teach very well if the instructor has the patience to explain the rudimentary philosophical vocabulary that fewer and fewer undergraduates seem to bring to upper-division courses in history.

In keeping with this outlook, the First Edition of the *Sourcebook* included Peirce, Rudolph Carnap, Thomas Kuhn, and Richard Rorty as well as Royce, James, and Dewey, and the same Holmes essay Miller had used. But with the exception of Strauss, whose case is driven in large part by the "not enough conservatives" complaint, we have almost never received suggestions about adding philosophers to Volume Two. Indeed, we dropped Carnap after the second edition because we were unable to find a single colleague anywhere who had ever assigned the 1935 logical positivist classic "The Rejection of Metaphysics" that I, for one, felt so very important. Even instructors who assigned almost all of our other selections routinely skipped Carnap.

I had lobbied edition after edition for John Rawls's "Justice as Fairness" (1958) and W. V. O. Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951), but was repeatedly talked out of both. George Santayana's "Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy"—much more accessible than Rawls or Quine, and largely a commentary on American elite culture generally, with attention to Twain and Whitman as well as James and Royce—has been a standard for us since the second edition, but cutting Santayana and Royce is a suggestion we sometimes get if we press colleagues really insistently for ideas about where to cut the *Sourcebook*. Hook and Marcuse have been in since the fifth edition, but mostly in their capacity as Marxists with overt political engagements. Finally in the sixth edition I managed to incorporate Rawls, using his 1987 essay "The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus," which broadens Rawls's earlier concern with Kantian ethical theory into a greater engagement with issues in more explicitly political theory.

of how differently the field of American intellectual history was conceptualized in Miller's time from the way many colleagues organize their courses today.

In no domain is philosophy more important than in the study of ideas about science and about the implications of scientific knowledge for culture, a major focal point in Volume Two. Peirce's "The Fixation of Belief," James's "The Will to Believe" and "What Pragmatism Means," Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Rorty's "Science as Solidarity," as well as Carnap's attack on metaphysics, are all highly relevant, but so, too, are the several essays by Dewey that we used at one time or another. But beyond philosophy we attempted to strengthen this science-related component of the *Sourcebook* with several scientists, with mixed results. Neither Keller nor Sagan worked well, as explained above, and when we tried Albert Einstein's 1947 "Atomic War or Peace," colleagues pointed out that it was a narrowly political essay on a passing topic that mostly served the symbolic purpose of getting the most famous American scientist into the Table of Contents. Hence in the sixth edition we dropped Einstein for J. Robert Oppenheimer's more theoretically engaged "Science and Man's Community," an essay of 1954 that is capacious in its portrait of the scientific vocation in relation to the social order. In the sixth edition, too, we chose as our representative environmental theorist the science-affirming Stewart Brand (from his 2009 *A Whole Earth Discipline: An Ecopragmatist Manifesto*) in place of the more "spiritual" Aldo Leopold, from whose *A Sand County Almanac* of 1949 we had used a selection in the fifth edition.

Ideas about literature and the arts were also prominent components of the field of American intellectual history in the 1950s and 1960s, but, as with philosophy, have generated less interest in recent decades, perhaps because of the antielitist tenor of many of the scholars attracted to cultural history. From the first edition onward we have kept William Dean Howells's classic defense of realism, "Pernicious Fiction," and Lionel Trilling's widely discussed 1961 meditation on cultural modernism. But Capper, who has an interest in literary culture comparable to my own interest in philosophy, and I were both dismayed to find in our canvassing while preparing for the sixth edition that some colleagues identified both Howells and Trilling as appropriate cuts. We retained both, and even added a chapter from Joseph Wood Krutch's humanistic meditation of 1929, *The Modern Temper*, but the trend is clearly against attention to the critical discussion of literature and the arts. H. L. Mencken's attack on Puritan Victorian culture, with us since the second edition, has played well, as has Henry Adams's "The Virgin and the Dynamo," but our correspondents remain largely indifferent to Clement Greenberg's "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" and Susan Sontag's "Against Interpretation," both with us since the third edition, and to Thomas Wentworth Higginson's 1867 "Plea for Culture," with us since the fifth. We have had the great literary critic Edward Said since the fifth edition, but our selection, the opening chapter of his 1978 book *Orientalism*, ranges well beyond the domain of literature and the arts and is often seen as a political document. We have made no effort to

include fiction, although we recognize fiction as a basic component of intellectual history. We know that most instructors assign one or more novels along side the *Sourcebook*. Literary anthologies, moreover, are numerous.

Our insistence on keeping a fair measure of literary and philosophical selections can serve as a reminder that Capper and I, while responsive to our correspondents, have followed our own instincts. Since my purpose in this essay is to register trends in the profession I have emphasized the ways in which Capper and I have been pushed and pulled in various directions, but I do not want to leave the impression that *The American Intellectual Tradition* is the work of a committee. While determined to produce a sourcebook that can actually serve large numbers of our colleagues, we have also kept close to our own teaching priorities and to our own sense of what intellectual history as a distinctive endeavor has to offer today's students.

I conclude with a particularly striking indicator of how an engagement with political ideas has driven the field in recent years. This is the place that social science has found in the *Sourcebook*. I have alluded in the preceding pages to many social scientists, but I have mentioned almost all of them in relation to political alignments. This is true of Ward, Sumner, Gilman, Tugwell, Myrdal, Bell, Mills, Friedman, and Huntington. Rostow, our representative "modernization theorist," is often treated by our correspondents in relation to his perceived political position as a "Cold War liberal." Margaret Mead, a consensus choice since the beginning, functioned more as a liberalizing public moralist than as a social scientist. I believe it is fair to say that the only social scientists in the *Sourcebook* not largely defined in political terms by our correspondents are psychologists. Of these we have had only three: Chodorow, the psychoanalytically oriented theorist of gender, behaviorist B. F. Skinner, and social psychologist Erik Erikson. We used Skinner in several early editions but he was not popular, so we dropped him when we added Chodorow. Erikson, who functions as a critical commentator on American society as well as a theorist of the mind, has remained popular. From time to time we have asked colleagues how they would respond to Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, and other leading social scientists whose audience has been more confined to academia, but very few have welcomed such a direction for the *Sourcebook*. The monographic literature of American intellectual history has advanced effectively into the study of social science, but this interest is only modestly reflected in the way our colleagues teach the field to undergraduates.

Where does all this leave us? These debates over a teaching canon yield the conclusion that the field of American intellectual history is less and less disposed to engage ideas except in their political role. But teaching habits tend to lag somewhat behind monographic engagements, and are driven in part by the need for stability: how many of my lectures am I going to rewrite this year? Books and articles by several younger historians, especially in the pages of *Modern*

Intellectual History, indicate that philosophical topics are regaining some of the ground they lost.⁵ But these signs of renewal are recent and remain scattered. The young scholars who write about philosophy, social science, and literary culture struggle for acceptance among social and political historians who too often suppose that cultural history is a successor field to intellectual history, rather than a fraternal field with some overlap. A vital reason to hang on to the concept of “intellectual” as opposed to “cultural” history is that without the former, the history profession is much less likely to pursue studies of natural science, of the social-scientific disciplines, of literary culture, of theology, of political theory, and of philosophy. The very theme of the accommodation of Protestant Christianity with the Enlightenment, so vital to the study of American intellectual history, has relatively little presence in the scholarship that has gone forward under the sign of cultural history during the past thirty years. Cultural history as practiced by American history specialists has tended to place more emphasis on indigenously American phenomena than on parts of American experience that partake of the larger history of the north Atlantic West, while exactly the opposite is true of intellectual historians. The contributions of cultural historians are to be embraced and celebrated, but a loose division of labor serves us all well.

Where, then, is Leo Strauss? He is out there keeping distinguished company with Theodore Parker and Edmund Wilson and Kate Millett and W. V. O. Quine, caught in the crosscurrents of uncertainty about what texts best enable students to understand American intellectual history.

⁵ I have discussed recent historiographical developments in “Thinking Is as American as Apple Pie,” *Historically Speaking* (Sept. 2009), 17–18; and in “American Intellectual History, 1907–2007,” in James Banner, ed., *A Century of American Historiography* (New York, 2010), 21–29. For earlier vindications of philosophically and literarily centered visions of the field see my “Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals,” in John Higham and Paul Conkin, eds., *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (Baltimore, 1979), 42–63; and “American Intellectual History: Issues for the 1980s,” *Reviews in American History* X (1982), 306–17.