

44. But Then Someone Asked Me: “Why are You the Only One to Make Such Loud Complaint?” (1994)

“But then someone asked me: ‘Why are you the only one to make such loud complaint?’ I answered him: ‘Are students, particularly graduate students who desire the highest marks in order to go on to even higher studies – are they in the best position to challenge their professors? Are they not rather in the worst position?’ I have encountered disgruntled and dissatisfied students who have criticized and in no small way the quality of professorial instruction. But they did so amongst themselves and for the most part saw not the slightest possibility of improving the situation. They therefore chose to bite their tongues when it came to complaining about those who have the power to make life difficult for them. Holding their noses as well as their tongues, they also learned to put up with the slow spiritual death of themselves. That is, the subtle incremental rooting out and slow wasting away of whatever was in them which at one time spoke of enthusiasm, fire, a desire to learn for its own sake. Sensing that the university is in some sense the graveyard of this ideal as much as its patron and promoter, they learned to put all considerations of a non-practical nature aside. In the meantime the university carries on and thinks well of itself for having carried out its mandate. When some intellectual maverick then comes along and points out its defects, he is scorned and considered to be a mere troublemaker. The university in effect says to him: ‘We already have our reformers and our reforms. We don’t need such would-be destroyers as yourself.’ And so in this way as in others it blithely ignores what it best should know, namely, that there is an intimate bond between creation and destruction. If the second strikes fear at the heart of the university, it is because it only has worldly concerns as its preoccupation.”

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