

major themes and connections between them. In sum, *Practical Visionaries* is a book that belongs on the shelf of everyone who is interested in the history of education.

Cathy James
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/
University of Toronto

Paul Axelrod. *Values in Conflict: The University, the Marketplace, and the Trials of Liberal Education*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. Pp. 203.

When picking up a book on the crisis in the university these days, I too often make it only about half-way through. I read the Introduction and two or three chapters, assume I've got the point and toss the book aside. In contrast, reading *Values in Conflict: The University, the Marketplace, and the Trials of Liberal Education*, by Paul Axelrod, professor and dean of the Faculty of Education, York University, a leading historian of Canadian education, author of *The Promise of Schooling: Education in Canada, 1800-1914* (1997), and *Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada During the Thirties* (1990), I felt challenged from the start. As I read *Values in Conflict* through – it is compressed, about 200 pages, including an Introduction, Conclusion, Notes, Bibliography, Index, and five thematic chapters in the centre of the book – I found myself filling its margins with notes. Although I wanted to quarrel with several points, that was part of the challenge. There is no space in a short review even to list the topics for contention *Values in Conflict* generates, but one can point at least to a few of them. (Beyond the scope of this review but worth mentioning even briefly is that we benefit from Axelrod's broadening the historical lens from Canada to include some comparative study of the university in the United States, Britain, and Australia).

In the past there was a unified pattern to higher education, an essential, core, defining idea or vision of what a liberal education ought to be, whether articulated in terms of balance and harmony, religion, science, the well-rounded Christian gentleman, Mathew Arnold's "the best that is known and thought in the world," or what the late Bill Readings called the "university of culture." Axelrod

discusses these traditions in his first chapter, "Roots and Branches of Liberal Education." This is Axelrod's terrain, the history of the idea of liberal education, but reading the chapter to the end, I began to wonder if Axelrod was fully aware of how historicist an impression it leaves. Axelrod makes no transcendental or foundational claims for any one tradition. What readers may take away from his excavation of the past, then, is that particular traditions of liberal education were good only for particular times and particular places; all are provisional, contingent, evanescent. The tradition of liberal education is revealed as historically compromised, laden with the cultural assumptions of a particular historical moment. All traditions were adaptive in their time and all were revised in light of changing conditions. To be sure, Axelrod carries on within the general tradition of liberal education but he does not seem to be especially attached to any one of the "roots" or "branches" of that tradition. At any rate, Axelrod's point is that now liberal education has to be rethought again, for our time.

Axelrod subsequently puts forward a vision of a liberal education for our time: "Liberal education in the university refers to activities that are designed to cultivate intellectual creativity, autonomy and resilience; critical thinking; a combination of intellectual breadth and specialized knowledge; the comprehension and tolerance of diverse ideas and experiences; informed participation in community life; and effective communication skills" (pp. 34-35). Now the question is: how should all this be viewed? Are we to assume that Axelrod's vision of liberal education is good only for our "time," then; its sell-by date today, or one year from today? Also, perhaps there can no longer be a unity of spirit and purpose in higher education, but still one would like some sense of priorities among Axelrod's multiple and competing missions for liberal education. For example, one would like to know Axelrod's answer to Herbert Spencer's grounding question: "What knowledge is of most worth"? And doesn't Axelrod's capacious definition of liberal education point to one source of the current crisis of the university, implying as it does uncertainty about priorities and central tasks?

Axelrod warns that liberal education in the Canadian university is at risk. He identifies the source of the most serious threat to liberal education – globalization, commercialization, and market forces; universities have come to resemble large corporations. The corporatization of the university is aided and abetted by government funding policies that "privilege certain academic endeavours over others, namely, applied science, high technology,

business, selected professions, and mission-oriented research, all at the expense of the social sciences and humanities, the fine arts, and basic scholarly inquiry” (p. 86). Axelrod protests that universities are not equipped to lead or save economies, if that is the rationale for market-driven policies. In fact, government policies that focus on economic performance and targeted research actually imperil the university’s ability to generate the discovery of new knowledge that might actually have some long-term economic benefits. Axelrod says the greatest contribution universities can make to society is to ensure that liberal education thrives.

Throughout *Values in Conflict*, I felt that I was in the presence of an author who is learned, thoughtful, and deeply caring about the fate of liberal education. Axelrod eschews any of the overheated tropes of warfare currently employed in depictions of the university: “Crisis in the Academy,” “Smiling Through the Cultural Catastrophe,” “The Battle of the Books,” “Petrified Campus,” “The University in Ruins.” His is a quieter inquiry, a “market correction,” if I may employ such terminology here. There is an occasional swipe at postmodernism, “dogmatic and intolerant” academics, marketplace jargon, and the “growing culture of entrepreneurialism” in the academy, but Axelrod devotes little space to polemics. (The most pugnacious thing about *Values in Conflict* is the title).

An alternate current of optimism and disheartenment about the state of Canadian higher education runs through the book. But I would say mostly optimism; Axelrod is an educator and cannot help suggesting some steps for the renewal of liberal education. Axelrod’s endorsement of what should be, but alas is not, the most banal of truisms – the need for greater openness and transparency in academic-corporate links, intellectual autonomy, critical thinking, creative pedagogy, collegiality, and civility in discourse – is welcome. At a time when universities are under severe pressure, these are things that need to be said and Axelrod says them well.

By temperament, Axelrod is not a culture warrior. He approaches his study in the spirit of John Henry Newman’s ideal of the liberal mind (*The Idea of a University*) – the spirit of “equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom.” And that is the problem, isn’t it? Axelrod is not angry enough, not outraged enough. *Values in Conflict* is put forward by Axelrod as a call for a national debate on the current direction of the university and it deserves a wide readership. But, since so many in academe in Canada, and in North America generally nowadays, hanker to

engage in political and culture warfare, who will read so judicious and moderate a work besides me and thee, Professor Axelrod?

Sol Cohen
UCLA

Varda Burstyn. *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics and the Culture of Sport*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Pp. 528.

In her varied roles as political scientist, social critic, policy adviser, and feminist activist, Varda Burstyn's name is familiar both within and outside Canadian academic circles for her incisive analyses of such issues as the relations of gender, family, work, and state, censorship, health policy and reproductive technologies. Her latest book will not disappoint readers who have become accustomed to her forceful critiques of the state of things. In plain language, Burstyn probes the evolution of the sport nexus, which she defines as that web of associated and interlocking organizations that include sports, media, industry, government, public education, and recreation (p. 3).

By means of a semi-historical narrative, Burstyn capably demonstrates how, since the nineteenth century, sport has been a remarkably resilient, highly adaptive, and increasingly potent transnational systemic prop for capitalism, imperialism, racism, and male dominance. The interactions of sport and other cultural forms (especially advertising and mass media) gave rise to an ideology that she classifies as hypermasculinity, or an exaggerated ideal of manhood linked mythically and practically to the role of warrior. By the 1920s, abetted by the new communications technologies and the ever-growing influence of advertising, the muscular Christianity of the nineteenth-century sport fields had metamorphosed into a new American masculine ideal, a commercialized, overtly sexualized and racialized "underworld primitivism" hinging on male violence, sexual promiscuity without responsibility, and physical aggression (p. 90). Burstyn pays close attention to the class elements at play in such constructions, as well as in sport participation, but it is the concept of "gender classes" – that class membership is defined as much by gender as by economic status – that she emphasizes. Thus, although she sees her