

Philip Rieff: A Personal Remembrance

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You only live once, if then.

—Philip Rieff

If one goes only by the obituaries in the *New York Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, Philip Rieff will be remembered for his marriage to Susan Sontag, his work on Sigmund Freud, and his provocative, indeed, so-called reactionary statements about abortion, homosexuality, and MTV. He was married to Sontag for less than a decade and married to his second wife, the philosopher turned lawyer, Alison Douglas Knox, for more than four decades. He wrote incisively on Freud's impact on Western culture, shrewdly negotiating a respect for Freud's genius with an attack on its consequences, the latter of which was of far greater interest to him. His pronouncements on what he referred to as the "spiritual hot potatoes" of our time were certainly provocative, but not without nuance and not without a despair that could be easily reduced to one political side or the other. He was an intellectual and a moralist, a combination that put him at odds with most of his fellow teachers who had no problem with being thought of as intellectuals, but whose only claim to moralizing was about their own and other people's politics. Rieff once wrote that "There is nothing to be learned from politics except who won and who lost; no more is there anything to be learned from society, except who is in and who is out." In this characteristic way of thinking, Rieff often said that he walked on eggshells by which he meant that for all his social pretenses at civility, people were frequently taken aback by what he had to say.

Those social pretenses were first and foremost represented by how he dressed and spoke. One obituary refers to him as a dandy—this, the man who wrote the greatest cultural obituary about Oscar Wilde in "The

Impossible Culture: Wilde as a Modern Prophet." This essay, an indictment of what he came to call "third culture," put Rieff at odds at once with liberationists but also with their critics, all of whom succumbed to the doctrines and dictates of publicity, which Rieff disdained but could not entirely resist however ambivalently. Susan Sontag was the brilliant creation of modern publicity, perhaps the first truly public intellectual whose public persona outshone her considerable skills and talents as a writer. Did the one depend on the other? Was what she had to say as important as the persona created publicly for her by her publicists and fawning press? Even her son, David Rieff, added to the fundamental meaning of this ambivalence about recognition and attention by writing after she died about her enduring struggle with and unyielding fight against cancer, more than suggesting his own ambivalence about her taking advantage of her status to seek out any possible, real treatment for her illness, despite the fact that someone less well-known, less wealthy, less fortunate might miss such an opportunity. Philip Rieff would have called this false guilt. But there is the problem. Publicity and all it contributes to modern fame and celebrity have effectively replaced status and rank as the determining factors of privilege. Yes, there will always be some form of inherited wealth and status, but the modern media cares little about inheritance except as men and women act to make a difference in the world with their wealth and to be so acknowledged. The legions of the wealthy who go unnoticed are proof enough that the functions and pathologies of publicity have very little to do with social class, except for the movement up and down in the inevitable

hierarchies that human beings create for themselves, in other words, except for conspicuous forms of success and failure. Modern publicity fully contrives and eventually drives personality (all personalities, known and unknown alike), and in the age of “psychological man,” it, more than anything else, is what promises and guarantees celebrity, fame, and fortune.

As for his dress: Philip Rieff was instrumental in bringing Erving Goffman to the University of Pennsylvania as a Benjamin Franklin Professor (a title Rieff also held). He told the story of walking near his home in center city Philadelphia when Goffman pulled along side in an open convertible sports car. Rieff, dressed in a three-piece suit, a gold watch chain hanging from his vest, and with a bowler and cane—in the middle of summer—looked down at Goffman and his young, female companion. Goffman, wearing shorts, flip-flops, and sunglasses looked up at Rieff and remarked, “Philip, aren’t you suffocating in that outfit?” With hardly a notice of Goffman’s words, Rieff looked directly at his lovely companion and said, “Professor Goffman is a rich man who dresses like a poor man. I am a poor man who dresses like a rich man.” And then he continued to walk along the street without saying another word. Legend has it that Rieff and Goffman exchanged such ripostes at a time when this was good fun and nothing more was meant by it than could be thought of sociologically. They were their roles but they admired one another greatly. Their endeavor to respect each other with humor was before the present era of an overwrought earnestness that goes hand-in-hand with a façade of equality and that has weakened the ability of academics to withstand criticism of their cherished pieties. Too many academics take too much too personally and too seriously, and so, without the opportunity to acknowledge real differences among ourselves, the ease with which offense is taken is more often simply an underhanded way to silence one’s critics. The tendency to manage others by ignoring what they say, by condemning how they say it, has pushed real debate outside colleges and universities, perhaps where it finally belongs. The rough ride of administering in higher education has everything to do, again, in the age of “psychological man” with personality (of administrators, teachers, and students). The best strategy for lasting in administrative positions is to be a man or woman without qualities and to find and promote others lacking similarly.

Rieff often said that “Everything is in the delivery.” But he meant by this just the opposite of what it now means to legions of talking heads who conform to nothing other than their ratings without which they cannot exist. Rieff’s manner was protected by the simple fact of tenure. He conveyed a consummate self-confidence about himself in the presence of others. Any confessions to the contrary were reserved for more intimate conversation. To call him a dandy misses entirely the context of his dress. It was his personal escape from everything about himself that he thought less of. He took pleasure in his formalities. There was also, to be sure, an evolution in his dress that gave him even more pleasure over the years, most of all in British haberdashery. When he sent me a small collection of his ratty bowties, he was saying not only that he could not bear to throw them away but that he knew my academic dress was also fixed in its own permanent way. He admired permanence of which dress, as fashion, was the least representative; all the more reason to stick with it against fashion.

As for how he spoke: Many people remarked on Rieff’s affectations of speech, an Anglo-American dialect that is hardly unique to him. I have met more than my share of chips off the old Rieff block who cultivate the snob-appeal of appearing to come from somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Rieff’s diction, on the other hand, brought out the best in him as a teacher, that is, as someone capable and willing to correct how others speak and thus think. He did this in a variety of ways, most often in his classes by prohibiting what he called “word-spinning” in the interpretation of texts. The hidden meanings in these great texts we read together allowed for a good deal of humorous speculations, including some that must be counted as canonical. One that I only heard second-hand was when Rieff asked students whether any animals other than human beings engaged in sexual relations face-to-face. A student replied that he thought the three-toed sloth was just such an animal. Rieff’s mordant response was, “Mr. Bailey, please do not remove your shoes.” In my own case, I recall especially two occasions that revealed his humane teaching as well as his delight in clever truths or “cleverities” as we called them.

In a lecture that he was invited to give at Haverford College in the 1970s, Rieff was accompanied by at least a half dozen of his own students, some of us carrying his books on his behalf. When he sat down at a table in a classroom reserved for his talk, we piled the many

books in front of him making it nearly impossible to see him. Everything was, of course, in the delivery. And although I do not recall his making use of more than a couple of books, all the others were an effective prop for demonstrating that he was a person of the book. Someone later remarked that Rieff emphasized his Jewishness among those audiences he took to be largely gentile, while among largely Jewish audiences and colleagues he would let it be known how extensive his knowledge was about Christianity. At one point in his Haverford lecture, he asked me to read from a particular text, Aquinas I think. When I read the word "univocal" I pronounced it "u-nee-vocal," with emphasis on the "u." Rather than correct me by simply pointing out the usual pronunciation, he took the opportunity to teach by reminding everyone that it did not matter how it was pronounced as long as one knew what it meant. I remember that moment with the kind of affection a student should have for a teacher able and willing to make you an example without also making you a prisoner.

At some later point, when my own familiarity with Rieff's humor was greater, we were in class going at a particular passage with some intensity. Rieff made a wonderful remark about the word "dog." "And we all know what dog spells backwards." Perhaps you have to recall the first time this dawned on you or was pointed out. It may be only a sight-gag, but the feeling it evokes is nonetheless delightful especially for those who love dogs. Rieff then referred to his own name and remarked, "And we all know what Rieff spells backwards." For a moment everyone remained silent, and I piped up in my best falsetto "ffffeeer??" Rieff looked at me, turned bright red, and then roared. His love of language, of thinking carefully, of enjoying what also could be taken seriously were all high marks of his teaching vocation.

Rieff's coterie of students, particularly from the early 1970s to the early 1980s was a legend in his own department. Perhaps some of those students thought an association with him could promise a position in the academic world. But he always insisted that we develop other skills besides the one he taught in sociological theory. Many of my contemporaries had come to study with him with little or no background in sociology. Some came, like me, because they had read something he had written. His was no ordinary mind steeped in professional doings. Indeed, he had virtually no interest

in the professional activities of sociologists. This was, to my mind, a critically misguided message to send to young graduate students who most of all needed the reassurance that they were not completely alone in their endeavors. I think Rieff knew that distinguishing between sociology as a field of thought and sociologists at work was, in the end, a false distinction, but he seemed indifferent to such things when putting up appearances that might instead have greatly enhanced his own ability to make more of a mark in the profession. That he had no real interest in making such a mark may be looked on as a sign of his purity of heart as he might have called it, but we also know better that a pure heart can be a great danger either to oneself or to others. Everything intellectual about Rieff should have enabled him to know better, and he probably did, but could not help himself. He also expressed severe judgments about his colleagues, some of whom suffered as a result. On this matter of walking on eggshells, I wish I had said to him even once, find another path.

Rieff commanded a kind of tragic loyalty among his students. Those of us who came to study with him found ourselves both in a department and under a particular individual's realm of influence. This seemed to work better for those students who were not selected by Rieff to be his assistants. In my time, at least two of them started out with what seemed to be brilliant careers, only to end up going into other professions. Those of us who were not his direct assistants fared much better, at least in terms of finding jobs, with his and others' help. His disdain for the profession of sociology was more about his own temperament than it was about the intellectual tradition of sociology. When luminaries in the profession visited him, he would recount how they would ask him about where his work "fit in." "But is it sociology, Philip?" This was one of the highest compliments he could be paid from such encounters. He was not really contemptuous of their work or their successes; in fact, he no doubt privately envied the attention given to such people running institutes and traveling by invitation hither and yon. He pursued his share of such traveling as well. But who in the profession of sociology has been asked to deliver the Gauss Lectures at Princeton, the Trilling Lectures at Columbia, the Terry Lectures at Yale, and numerous other distinguished lectures here and abroad? The fact was and is that such minor players who have cultivated reputations exclusively as sociologists were no doubt envious of him, and for good reason. He had something

to teach them, but they, too, had decent sinecures, and with them no reason to be persuaded that Rieff's brilliance had anything to do with what they did in sociology.

Rieff's ambivalence about sociology never affected me greatly. I majored in it at Brandeis University, where, in my time, some had all but given up on professional sociology and were experimenting with one therapeutic regime or another that went by such names as "co-counseling." Others saw sociology as a way of changing the world. And finally, through the misfortunes of history, but to the benefit of American intellectual life, a few of us studied with refugee scholars—Kurt Wolff and Paul Kecskemeti in particular in my case—who represented the European tradition and promise of sociology that Americans like Philip Rieff respected as well. I came to Penn without the hostility toward sociology so often expressed by outsiders. (One of my recently discovered favorite expressions of such hostility is from Isaiah Berlin who is supposed to have said that, "sociologists reminded him of men who wear deep-sea diving suits to enter a room full of people to find out what they were doing.") Rieff could easily have been called a political scientist or political philosopher; after all, he did earn his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago in political science. But he chose to be called a sociologist.

All of this is much more complicated, and less interesting, than is worth relating here. But it signals for me personally a truth about my relationship to Philip Rieff, which is that I never, at his instruction, put all my ego-eggs in one basket, including his basket. I expect that I paid a price for this in the end, but I expect further that it was the price paid for having been his student. Rieff often repeated that the iron law of gratitude is ingratitude. But the "debt immense of endless gratitude" can never be repaid, nor should it have to be.

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I knew Philip Rieff, as his student, as the editor of a published volume of his essays and reviews, and as a sympathetic listener during hundreds of hours of phone conversations over the course of thirty years. During that time, I benefited enormously from his advice and counsel, and I survived the gauntlet of entrance into the permanent guild of academia, despite my decision to write about physicians and abortion, risky in and of itself, but all the more so at a women's college in the

aftermath of the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment. The subject of abortion, its gritty and gruesome details, was of largely polemical and private interest to Rieff. To say he opposed it led him neither to write against it in the pages of *The Human Life Review* nor to become in any way affiliated with the right-to-life movement. His was not a political objection, but it did no doubt stem from the fact that Susan Sontag aborted a pregnancy during their marriage. This is one of those once intensely private facts that haunted him greatly, and when he first told me about it, I did not know then that his confidence was not really at all what I thought (that is, strictly between us) but rather his continuing and anxious awareness that this intensely private fact had been revealed publicly by Sontag herself. I was most of all privy to his regret, a profound and enduring emotion, not to be confused with nostalgia.

On a visit he made to Boston to attend a preposterously organized conference about what to call the era after modernity (without calling it post-modernity), he insisted I drive him to Cambridge, in particular along those streets he had walked while living there with Sontag and their young son. We drove around a specific block five or six times, slowing down again and again as we passed the house in which they had lived together. Here was an occasion, literally driving in circles, of heartfelt regret that explains best of all to me why he dedicated the last book published in his lifetime to "Susan Sontag in remembrance." In the first set of page proofs for that book, the dedication was "To the memory of the second commandment." The decision to substitute Susan Sontag for the second commandment faithfully illustrates the heart and mind of Rieff's primary ambivalence about culture and his analysis of it. Besides Hashem, there were other gods and goddesses demanding attention, and despite all the fictions of third culture, the preceding cultures of fate and faith exerted their own special pressures on the present always leaving some with enough answers and still others with more questions. The nature of all authority is to prescribe questions and provide answers to them. Should he/we remember the second commandment or Susan Sontag? He wanted certain things both ways, a longing in all of us that makes us who we are.

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To think about the world mess as it is with the analytic acuity of Philip Rieff in one's own mind is

to join forces with a powerful and enduring kind of insight. Most of the people I know who knew him and who appreciated how captivating this insight could be were always hungry for more of it. This was no mere illusion of shifting angles on difficult matters. It was not simply a gifted intelligence. Rieff had an extraordinary memory, not so much for long quotations, but rather for the use of certain words, phrases, and expressions from an equally extraordinary range of texts and subjects. But he was polar opposite from being intellectually muscle-bound. When I proposed that we entitle the collection of his previously published writings, *The Feeling Intellect*, because I had found its appearance in *Fellow Teachers* to exemplify Rieff's teaching authority, he instantly insisted that I review Wordsworth's use of it in *The Prelude* as an important anchor of authority for understanding it.

He was not a patient editor of others' writings, but he did cast his judgment on the effects of such writings on his own thoughts. Some of the judgments seemed contradictory, including the frequently remarked observation that there was too much writing altogether (he wrote a great deal himself), words drowning out each other in a sea of egos tied in no way together – his judgment of the blogosphere would seem obvious. Yet the potential for reception of his work to a larger audience will probably depend if not exclusively, then at least decisively, on this electronic medium where already a variety of commentators are celebrating the recent and forthcoming publication of his work. For better or worse, Rieff has left the world physically at the very moment the soul of his work has begun to enter cyberspace. He objected to the digitizing of books, but without this technology, even the illustrations in his last published book, *My Life among the Deathworks*, would have been more difficult to accomplish and no doubt more costly. What will be read and how what is read will be delivered in the future for reading is probably less important in the long run than whether the teaching elites can find ways to sustain and further the cause of reading itself.

The question of Rieff's reception more generally should be answered carefully. One piece I chose not to reprint in *The Feeling Intellect* appeared in *Harper's* in 1961 entitled "The Mirage of College Politics," which was by 1990 dated in what seemed all too particular references to that earlier time. In retrospect, I regret not having included it,

for it contains some fine examples of Rieff's capacity to achieve disinterest in ways remote to the more convoluted sensibilities of writings he published after *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* in 1966. For example, he wrote in the 1961 essay that "The student radicals and conservatives are thus strangely alike: both feel embattled and both can only protest. Lacking political solutions of their own, the radicals now pit their ethical consciences against the dangers of the political game itself. For example, their agitation against the moral horror of nuclear weapons is absolute, with no attempt to visualize political costs or alternatives. And while the newly vocal conservatives may voice more or less well-founded suspicions of liberal gospel, they show no signs that they have ever tried to visualize concretely a society in which both public welfare and foreign aid are drastically limited."

Rieff's proleptic wisdom was to anticipate the coming nihilism of radical student politics, which in its most catastrophic forms challenged the very conditions for teaching and learning. He was without a doubt shaken by the 1960s as were many of his contemporaries who had already traveled far from the radical politics of their youth. But his growing silence in the world of literate journalism paralleled a growing distrust between radicals and conservatives about their ambitions and the possibilities of mutual engagement (and compromise) in the world of politics. The voice of disinterest is the unheard voice of our contemporary culture wars. I think Rieff reluctantly accepted the label of "conservative" to establish which side he was on in that war, but he never spoke with much conviction about democratic politics, not out of condescension but because politicians and the masses were moved not by their own lights but by the changes in our moral and cultural understandings of the world in which we live. The red meat of sociology was for him always prior to politics (and political philosophy) as it was for all the great figures in the canon of sociological theory.

Disinterest was the Archimedean point between having only one point of view (the essential nature of ideology) and having none at all (the essential nature of relativism). The greatest challenge in addressing Philip Rieff's later work is finding that point by which to judge the moral meaning of any thought or action. A review of *My Life among the Deathworks* in *Commentary* completely misrepresents Rieff's ambition in that

regard. His interest in art history was as a text analogue to his address to sociological theory. The assignment of the book to an art historian required some quick fixes on the part of the reviewer to parrot a cliché here and there about the history of sociology. But Rieff's making a mistake about the translation of "To be or not to be" into German—however infelicitous or however much an "ancient classroom gambit" it may be—can hardly compare as an infraction of the rule that if you don't know what you are talking about, you should not talk. I will always defend my old teacher against the type of mind that lacks grace and that gives in respect what it takes with ridicule. When Rieff ridiculed, he meant also to give respect its due without nitpicking, as for example, among his most memorable footnotes, his remarks in several of those notes about Bertrand Russell in *Fellow Teachers*, where he concludes, "Russell was a great barbarian. I honor his memory."

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Philip Rieff once wrote that "Contempt is the readiest emotion of one intellectual confronting another." This memorable rendition of academic hostility whose corollary is "The reason the game is so vicious is because the stakes are so low," seems by now to have lost its power to sting in an age of wild-eyed pundits, pontificators and shock jocks, all of whom will up any serviceable ante in order to be heard. Rieff never aspired directly to be heard; he had no publicist. By the time he published *Fellow Teachers* in 1973, he had convinced himself that the best way to teach and to work was apart from whatever limelight had gently shone on him up until then. But most of his admirers and certainly all of his reviewers of his most recent work have little idea about one salient fact in his alleged disappearance from the larger scene of social observation and commentary.

In 1968, Rieff worked tirelessly to arrange the appointment of J. P. Nettl to the University of Pennsylvania. His affection for Nettl was immense, seeing in this wealthy, superbly educated, and refined British and Jewish social thinker (he wrote a two-volume intellectual biography of Rosa Luxemburg) an ideal version of himself. The prospect of a kind of corporate enterprise with Rieff bringing Nettl to Penn to build a program together met with all the resistance that mediocrity can muster, but Rieff prevailed nonetheless. Very soon after arriving at Penn in the fall of 1968, Nettl was killed

in a plane crash on his way to Dartmouth College to deliver a lecture. Writing to Ralf Dahrendorf soon afterwards, Rieff despaired, "Peter's death has nothing to do with Fate, but with something more horrible, because meaningless, pointless, inexplicable, it was an accident, mere chance, the greatest waste. Suffering and death have no morality, not even the morality of malice against a good man. That is the complete tragedy of it." Rieff more than once recited to me in his low moments, Hamlet's dying words, "The rest is silence." Nettl's death destroyed an ambition in Rieff to engage the university in all the dirty work required to make something of it in one's own image. *Fellow Teachers*, which began as a lecture visit to Skidmore College and which was originally published in different form in the pages of *Salmagundi*, marked Rieff's turn to the classroom—as much a refuge from battles won and wars lost as a symbol of his deepest dedication to teaching.

Why should despair so much more often pass for intellectual sophistication than its weaker opposite, hope? I tried my best in all my encounters with Philip Rieff to engage his cheerful side, to give him the opportunity to complain without wallowing in it along with him. The effect was more often than not a good deal of laughter. He liked to hear jokes, but never told me any that he had heard, if in fact he did hear any. The obedience to formalities has its special costs or benefits, however they are to be considered, not least of which as an isolation and insulation from others' disappointments and despair. Hope among the intellectuals is cheap medicine; in its myriad utopian guises, it is patent medicine. But there is no pushing beyond hope and despair as Rieff imagined at the end of *The Triumph of Therapeutic*. The illusion of no difference, I think, following his own disappointments, led him to be of two minds about many things, as he always was when he was at his most difficult and most interesting.

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Part of the painfulness of growing older is that the command of one's intellectual and physical powers in their diminishment is not only less predictable but also makes one more vulnerable to being caught up short by others. Rieff was always in command in his classroom, and the decade of the 1980s, his last full decade of teaching, found him with large lecture courses recounted by students who came long after

my time. He also lectured beyond the University of Pennsylvania in those years and into the early 1990s, when he is said to have allegedly achieved a state of obscurity. One of those lecture tours, at the United States Naval Academy, did not go so well. Part of the difficulty was surely the result of his statements about abortion, homosexuality, and much of contemporary popular culture. He condemned the sexualization of everything, seeing in such obsessions another side of tyranny of the kind created by the Marquis de Sade. At the Naval Academy, of all places, he was directly challenged and admonished by several cadets for such opinions and other misstatements. In those years he was working from a manuscript that had grown in size and scope and that was more or less completed by 1995, two years after retiring from the University of Pennsylvania. In those two years, he held an appointment in Psychiatry at what was then the Medical College of Pennsylvania.

Rieff's departure from the University of Pennsylvania was not one of the finest moments in the history of that university. He had been born exactly 17 days too soon to benefit from a change in federal law that up until December 31, 1992, had allowed universities to impose mandatory retirement on faculty who had reached the age of 70 during that year. I know that if he had been born on January 1, 1923, instead of December 15, 1922, Rieff would have stayed on at Penn. Instead, he apparently did not prevail upon his colleagues or anyone else who might listen for help in obtaining a stay of execution of his retirement by the university. He expressed to me more than once his regret about not being aggressive or self-serving enough in this regard. I found that difficult to believe, but even if he did assert himself, he evidently failed to gain a favorable response. At one point, several years later, I wrote a letter, at his encouragement, to the then Provost at Penn requesting that Rieff be provided with support for his work (e.g., an office, special library assistance, etc.). I never received a response. So it goes with the cold business of university life. The younger generation now entering this precinct harbors no illusion about their employer's obligation to them, except as they negotiate their "package," as it were, "up front." Rieff may have felt deserving of some kind of special acknowledgement. But his miscalculation can hardly be underestimated in what it really means about this cold business where an unguarded ruthlessness about

career long ago replaced any genuine demonstration of commitment to a place and one's colleagues and thus a reasonable expectation of reciprocity. Rieff certainly knew how to play the game, but unlike my own generation, he was not ready to fly the coop with the next best offer. The price of constant negotiation of the terms of one's contract weakens the meaning of contract, not to mention the non-contractual dimensions of contract.

I visited Rieff several times after his appointment to the Medical College of Pennsylvania. For a year or so, he maintained a three-room office suite, appointed with numerous bookshelves and a private bath. He had his own secretary, and for the first year, at least, he seemed content in his new setting. He worked more on his *magnum opus* and delivered a memorable series of lectures to the medical students. Then, he suffered a mild stroke that left him blind in one eye. I was particularly aware of his fear about his loss of vision. By phone I tried to cheer him up by reassuring him that I had been seeing out of only one eye my entire life and look where it had gotten me. He would regularly ask me what it was like to get along with only one eye as he now had to do. I told him that it made me a better sharpshooter.

The aftermath of his stroke resulted in his never returning full-time to writing. Sometime after that, perhaps in 1995 or 1996, he turned over the bulk of the manuscripts on which he had worked, particularly at the Medical College of Pennsylvania, to one of his undergraduate students who had gone on to medical school and into psychiatry. I should point out that prior to that time, as far as I know, he had indicated to me and to others that I was his Literary Executor. Part of my ongoing responsibilities, which began in earnest following the publication of *The Feeling Intellect* and which increased dramatically before he departed from Penn, was to organize a voluminous collection of his papers and files that he sent in carton after carton from Penn to Wellesley over several years. By my count, I had approximately thirty long file drawers of materials, including the legendary manuscript on charisma. Several of my students, over several summers, helped me to identify and collate many of the materials. On a visit that he made to Wellesley, I showed him how we were storing his papers, and he seemed both honored and pleased. I opened the materials to researchers whom Rieff had given permission to look over what was housed at Wellesley.

By 2000, Rieff began to express a strong desire to see at least some of his unpublished writings in print. My own efforts in this regard were first to propose a volume of his best public lectures, at least a half-dozen of which had been recorded and transcribed. At his encouragement, I wrote to his University of Chicago editor, David Brent, proposing such a volume. Unfortunately, I did not appreciate fully at the time, despite his encouragement about the lectures, how anxious he was to have his *magnum opus* on sacred order/social order published. After one conversation with Brent I appreciated the dilemma. Nevertheless, to this day I believe it would have been best (and may still be best) for Rieff's legacy if a new generation can learn how his thought evolved over time through contact with his lectures. Addressing a live audience of careful listeners forced him to clarify his thoughts more straightforwardly than was the case in his writing. He never read from manuscript in such lectures, hoping that in quite literally thinking aloud, he would be moved to deeper and clearer formulations of his ideas. In my original proposal I recommended that a companion compact disc containing excerpts from his recorded lectures might also prove attractive to a new audience just as inclined to listen as it might be to read.

Rieff was clearly of two minds about all this, entrusting his last work to someone else without indicating to me what my role, if any, should be. I spoke one time with his student, Dr. Kenneth S. Piver, who is listed as the general editor of Rieff's *Sacred Order/Social Order*. In that conversation, Dr. Piver made it abundantly clear that he, not I, was to have exclusive authority over the eventual publication of the materials that Rieff had given him. I told him that was fine with me, even though I thought it was a mistake, and I sent him my inventory list of materials and eventually all the materials themselves that I had organized at Wellesley. I never understood why it took so long to bring Rieff's final work to publication, but I assume it had much to do with gaining a publisher's commitment. I had recommended to Rieff more than once that he establish contact with James Davison Hunter whom I

had known for many years and who had done more to put Rieff's theoretical endeavors into empirical practice than any other sociologist in the world. Without James Hunter's gracious intervention and enthusiastic support, the elegant appearance, under the auspices of the University of Virginia Press, of the first of what is expected to be three volumes of Rieff's last writings would not have occurred.

Late in Rieff's life, his son, David, once said to me that his father was a hypochondriac his entire life, but now he was actually ill. His closest students were accustomed to a certain cruelty on his part, which combined his own deeply felt anxieties about mortality with the insecurities that students felt about his affections toward them. It is now, after thirty years of knowing him, more than a mere impression that by the time he died there were many who thought of him as their most important teacher, and thus felt close to him in that thought and feeling, but there were others as well who once knew him as a teacher and who felt betrayed or indifferent, and in my case, most of all, in the end, sad. Rieff taught me to attend carefully to what I think and write, and about how to recognize and illuminate the vertical in authority along which we move in every thought and action. My task here has been to remember him as the teacher and human being he was, with an acknowledgment of the pain and pleasures such memory provides. Few will recall Philip Rieff as a self-deprecating man, but I remember once when he joked about owning a copy of the Bible in which was inscribed, "To my old teacher." He added that he expected someday to be waving up at all of us in the afterlife. The truth is Philip Rieff aspired always to wave us on from above. I do believe and believe he believed "There's a divinity that shapes our ends."

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