Lee T. PEARCY
"So Why Should We Hire *You*, Dr. Wilamowitz?" An Administrator's Perspective on Scholars and Scholarship in Schools

For several years now, I have been Director of Curriculum at a large, co-educational, K-12 independent school. Every year I look at dozens of resumes and letters of application from prospective faculty members. Many of them have Ph.D.s, and some profess an interest in pursuing, or continuing, active programs of scholarship. My administrative colleagues often view this kind of candidate with suspicion.

Clearly I do not share my colleagues' prejudice against Ph.D.s or scholars, but neither am I able to dismiss it as entirely unfounded. In the first part of this talk, I propose to explore the reasons that schools are suspicious of scholars. Three recur:

- Scholars are incomplete human beings.
- Scholars cannot relate what they do to the life of students.
- Scholars expect to take school time for non-school work.

Each of these, I suggest, has a grain of truth—but only a grain. Taken together, they reflect a picture of scholars and scholarship derived in part from popular culture, including contemporary polemics like *Who Killed Homer?* and in part from more or less distant memories of the relationship between university teachers and their students. They also reflect a distinctively American concept of what scholarship is, especially in the humanities. Scholarship, the concept holds, is essentially alienated from the business of American life.

Examining the historical roots of this alienation as it relates to classical scholarship in particular will be the business of the second, longer part of my talk. From our earliest, colonial beginnings, Classics in America has been a site of cultural tension, and thinking about classical studies has been a way to think about education and its place in a society in which nearly everything is negotiable. In the new Republic, classics provided a clear ground for debate, and by arguing for or against classical studies, it was possible to imply one's position in the dialectic from which the new nation was being born. In the first three decades of the Nineteenth Century, debating the role of classical studies became a means of giving voice to a number of related anxieties that grew out of the national act of self-definition. As they thought about education and scholarship, the Americans whom Alexis de Tocqueville observed came increasingly to think of themselves as an unclassical people. Finally, the simultaneous transformation of what Gerald Graff has called the Old College into the modern, distinctively American form of the university and the importation of *Altertumswissenschaft* opened up the rift that Gildersleeve saw between "the hold that the great poets of antiquity have on the popular mind" and classical philology, the "deeper knowledge . . . vouchsafed only to those who make it a special study."

In his American exile, Werner Jaeger once remarked that without the prestige of Humanism, classical scholarship was a waste of time. Anyone who needed proof of this

assertion, he went on to say, ought to come to America and learn from the way classical studies had developed there. Finally, I shall suggest that that American schools and classical scholars in them may begin to heal the alienation that Jaeger acutely observed.