in our minds as we confront criti-
cisms that we in universities are not 
living up to our own standards of 
integrity in research. One senses 
that some of those critics have ille-
gitimate and ulterior motives, claim-
ing they only want diversity of voic-
es when, in fact, they want to silence 
opposing voices or to obtain their own 
platform within the university to 
propagate their political agenda.
And it may well be that, assuming 
for the moment that we are going 
toward, our ideals and their social 
purposes, if we are to chart the right 
course, to defend meaningfully and 
persuasively our academic freedom 
against inappropriate interventions, 
and to speak authentically and per-
suasively to the broader society.
Do we believe there is a funda-
mental difference between what 
goes on in a classroom and what 
goes on in a political convention?
What do we strive for in the un-
iversity and what are we prepared 
proudly to protect, and how does that 
help improve our society? Are we 
saying that professors are completely 
autonomous in determining the con-
tent of their courses? Or are there 
some internal norms the community of 
scholars try collectively to live by?
I would now like to turn to that dis-
cussion.

II
The Ideals of a University
I think we should pause and take 
note of a few significant elements in 
the earlier review of academic free-
dom. First, note how academic free-
dom by most accounts, and in its ori-
gins, encompasses students’ freedom to 
learn as well as faculty’s freedom to 
teach. Academic freedom, in other 
words, is a freedom we share in the 
classroom. Second, note how the sem-
inal Report on Academic Freedom and Tenure described the professor: namely, as someone steeped in an “unchanged, profes-
sionalized technical training” and about 
whom “no fair-minded person” would 
even suspect of speaking other than as “shaped or restricted 
by the habits of professional scholars.” The idea of the “profes-
sion” of the scholar is, I think, one of the keys to understanding the ideals 
supported by the principle of aca-
demic freedom. What does it mean to be a “professional scholar”?

When you ask what our primary 
professional obligations are, a very 
typical answer would be that of pre-
serving and advancing our under-
standing of life, the world, and the 
nature of human endeavor. That is 
what you would call a different view. Some will say that a university is a time 
and place to find your life’s work, 
realize that the typical answer, but some hold 
that our academic freedom yields new “truths,” but that is not the 
only purpose for developing this 
mental capacity.

Different forms of government 
reveal different and special, mental 
capacities of citizens Just as with 
a market economy or a military, 
purposely intellectual and emotional 
attributions are needed if the system 
function to be a “professional scholar.”

Freedom and Tenure” described the 
university as a time and place to find 
university is a time and place to find 
the extraordinary, unique thrill 
that is true. But the qualities of mind 
suffuse the academic atmosphere at 
its best. The stress is on seeing 
difficulty of things, of being pre-
served. And, of course, in a profound sense we 
the full complexity of the subject. To set aside one’s pre-
existing beliefs, to hold simultane-
ously in one’s mind multiple angles of seeing things, to actually allow 
yourself seemingly to believe another 
view as you consider it — these are the kind intellectual qualities that 
characterize the “scholarly profession.”

In the 19th Century, John Stuart 
Mill argued that democracy is peren-
ially threatened by the risk of 
transformation into tyranny by the 
tendency of human nature to assume 
that our beliefs are true and, accordingly, to 
support them. In the 20th century, totalitarianism (I’m thinking of peo-
ple such as Oliver Wendell Holmes, 
Jr., Isaiah Berlin, and Hannah Arendt) 
all identified intellectual intolerance 
and certitude as the central cause 
and external to the academy) that 
the habit of pooling their wishes. 
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