Raymond Aron observed in his book, "The Opium of the Intellectuals" in the 1960s, that intellectuals were continually tempted by the 'longing for a purpose, for communion with the people, for something controlled by an idea and a will.' He observed that every faculty member I have known is aware of this impulse and tries to live by the scholarly temperament, just as we expect politicians to live by the democratic principle of maintaining the line between the different. Students have a stake in the university's success. Faculty and professional and the role of the citizen. The last thing we want to do is turn the campus into a political convention.

The fourth point is that all of us, but universities in particular must stand firm in insisting that, when there are lines to be drawn, we must and will be the ones to draw the lines. Neither politicians, nor pressure groups, nor the media. Ours is and must remain a system of self-government.

To be sure, as we have witnessed throughout recent history, the outside world will sometimes find the academy so dangerous and threatening that efforts seem necessary to make decisions for us about whom we engage and what we teach. This must not be allowed to happen. We must understand, just as we have come to with freedom of speech, that generally, that the qualities of mind we need in a democracy — especially in times of crisis — are precisely what the academy is designed to help achieve and will be necessarily dangerous and threatening when our institutional structures are engaged in a single minded or to put it another way, of one mind. In a democracy, that's what we must be wary of.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to note a deep irony of academic freedom, and its parent, freedom of speech. These freedoms, when exercised properly, often divert our attention from substantive issues. When controversies erupt over something someone said, we often quickly find ourselves in a debate about whether that speech is protected or not, rather than expending our energy explaining why our view of the facts was wrong and should be rejected.

With the broad perspective we've taken of the intellectual landscape, we can understand why this happens. Engaging with ideas, as it turns out, is actually a very hard thing to do. The demands it places on our powers of reason, of imagination, of tolerance often seem overwhelming. Indeed, as I said earlier, the more that our most fundamental beliefs are at stake the harder it is to defend them. Therefore, it is natural for all of us in a controversy to turn our attention to debating the narrower — and often seemingly safer — question of whether an idea is protected or not. We robustly need our clear-eyed vision of academic freedom, that the speech is protected or not, rather than expending our energy explaining why our view of the facts was wrong and should be rejected.

Schrecker, No ivory tower: McCarthyism and the universities (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 15. Available at http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocid=47616 See also Britannica's entries on 'University' and 'University of Berlin.'


12 Hofstader and Metzger, p. 496

13 Ibid. p. 495


16 Schrecker, No ivory tower, p. 10.