

The answer he gives is an interesting one. He says that because of their persecution they have been marginal people in each culture-- both in and of the culture and yet not of it, only on the margin of it. Because they have been marginal people they have had a double angle of vision. They have had the angle of vision both of their own long intellectual tradition as the People of the Book and of their tragic history. But also, they have had the angle of vision of the culture in which they have settled and of which they have become an integral part. From this double angle of vision they have been able to see things with a greater detachment than some of the others have.

This is Veblen's explanation. I find it on the whole not bad. I think that they have also had scars, resulting from persecutions, alienation, the sense of enstrangement from the majority cultures. The creativeness, I think, has been real. It has come partly from this marginal man aspect, and partly from having been part of the tradition of the life of the mind. May I say here as a footnote, that the two great traditions of the life of the mind in America were the tradition of the Puritans and the tradition of the Jews, both of whom came here as People of the Book.

A good part of American history has been one in which the life of the mind has not been respected. There have been long stretches in America of anti-intellectualism, as witnessed by Richard Hofstadter's book "Anti-intellectualism in American Life." It is worth reading because it traces the sources from which this anti-intellectualism sprang, the points at which it grew. Recently we have had to move away from anti-intellectualism toward a greater concern for the life of the mind. We no longer talk--as we talked only a decade ago or 15 years ago--of "eggheads" with contempt and derision. We now seek them out. Every President has to ask himself whether he has enough eggheads around in the White House. We depopulate whole university campuses and bring them there. May I say that even the Secretary of Defense has his own group of eggheads around him, about whom there are diverse opinions, as I understand it, in some of the strata of the defense services.

What has happened in American life, as what has happened elsewhere, is that we have found out that even a democracy has to have elites. I go back here to Thomas Jefferson who, in a letter to John Adams, said that no democracy like America could survive unless it could develop (and I quote) "an aristocracy of virtue and talent" note, he did not say a privileged aristocracy, not an