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Stanley Fish  
Free Speech Movement Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by  
Lisa Rubens  
in 2000

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## Interview with Stanley Fish

[Interview 1: October 23, 2000]

[Tape 1]

Rubens: I want to ask you, how did you identify yourself literally in terms of your position at the University of California and what your goals in 1964 were?

Fish: Well, in 1964 I'd only been there for about a year and a half, and actually I was still feeling my way into a profession with which I'd had no real familiarity. So it was all new to me, it was all new to my family, though it turned out later I had a cousin who was also a professor of English. I didn't know him at the time. So, as far as I was concerned, this was frontier territory.

Rubens: You were a professor of English.

Fish: Right.

Rubens: Where had you received your PhD?

Fish: Yale.

Rubens: And what were your thoughts about what you might specialize in?

Fish: Well, when I came out of graduate school I was a specialist in late Medieval literature. That is the literature roughly between the death of Chaucer and 1536, when some significant poetry was published by the poets Wyatt and Surrey. So there was that in-between period that very few things are ever said about, and that's where I was positioning myself.

Rubens: At Yale, whom did you work with particularly?

Fish: I was the dissertation student of a man named Talbot Donaldson, who was a Chaucerian, a very well-known Chaucerian.

Rubens: And is there anyone in your background particular--parents or undergraduate professors--who influenced you?

Fish: Yes, not my parents in any direct way, because they were not, themselves, people with advanced degrees, or even in the case of my father, with a degree of any kind, from high school or anything. There were two professors at the University of Pennsylvania where I was an undergraduate, both in the eighteenth century, Maurice Johnson and Arthur Scouten--both are now deceased unfortunately. Simply because

they showed interest in my papers and were lively people, they kind of nudged me in the direction of going to graduate school, although at the time I hadn't the slightest idea of what going to graduate school meant. And, indeed, didn't have the slightest idea of what going to graduate school meant even when I went there.

Rubens: Nevertheless you specialize and you write your dissertation. Your first job as a professor, not as a teaching assistant, was at the University of California?

Fish: At Berkeley, right.

Rubens: In the English department, you'd been there about a year and a half in the fall of 1964. Did you enjoy teaching?

Fish: Oh, I loved teaching. I liked every aspect of it. I liked the performance aspect of it, and I liked the excitement of it when things went well and students became interested in what they were doing.

Rubens: Did you teach any basic undergraduate courses?

Fish: Practically only basic undergraduate courses at that time. Usually in the year I would teach at least two sections of freshmen composition, and often two sections of what was then the sophomore survey course. And then, perhaps, one upper-division course. That was the way things were set up then; new people didn't teach anything but introductory courses.

Rubens: Do you remember when you first encountered the Free Speech Movement?

Fish: I do, indeed. In fact, I can picture it. My wife and I lived in a small house in Kensington, a suburb of Berkeley. We had a small kitchen and there was a radio in the kitchen. I was listening to the radio and I remember saying to my wife, "There are some news reports on the radio, and it seems like something very interesting is going on on campus." This was the night in which the students took over Sproul Hall Plaza, and Art Goldberg, I think--

Rubens: Art Goldberg had spoken from top of the car that had been surrounded that set off a chain of events.

Fish: Yes, and this was all being reported. And I think, although my memory here is a bit hazy, I believe we took a ride down to try to see what was going on but we weren't able to approach the campus.

But the next morning, I had an eight o'clock class, freshman composition class, and I remember going in early as I often did, around seven, and sitting on the deck of the student union. This was before a large building was placed in front of the deck so the deck had a great view of the bay, and I would sit there and have coffee and look at my notes in preparation for the class. Suddenly I marched what looked to me to be about 600 but must have been fewer than that Alameda County policemen, which suggested to me that something really extraordinary was happening.

And then, the events began to unfold day after day. I remember standing in the office of the English department in Wheeler Hall sorting my mail and hearing over the loudspeaker a Joan Baez song, and I thought, ah, they're playing Joan Baez records in order to excite or please the crowd, but no, it turned out that Joan Baez was there. So then I got the sense how this was no longer a confined, local story but was fast becoming something much larger.

Rubens: You're talking about standing in the English department sorting mail. Could you say something about your relationship to other professors, or to students, vis-a-vis the FSM?

Fish: Well, I found that members of my department, at least some of them, responded to this situation with an eagerness that at first I couldn't understand. Generally, they allied themselves with the student protest, and some of them went to work raising bail funds for students who had been arrested. And others became engaged in helping with whatever publicity or flyers or Xerox memos were going out. It became clear that, for some people in my department if not the majority of members of my department, this was the first time in many years that they had felt energized.

I remember going to see a colleague of mine who had gone to Yale graduate school with me, and he was in a room surrounded by students doing this organizing work. I said, "Stuart, what are you doing this for?" He said, "Well, I haven't had so much fun in my life." And others of my colleagues felt that for the first time they were doing, I suppose, although they wouldn't have used this language, the Lord's work. The Lord was not an orthodox god in any sense, but the Lord was some vague call to leftist protest activity. Then I asked myself the question, although I never asked them, what have you been doing before this? If this is the only time when you feel really alive and committed, what kind of performance were you offering your students on the days before this particular event erupted into your lives?

I also found very quickly that part of the faculty response to the student strikes and protests was to give over class to a discussion of the issues, which I refused to do. I remember a class I was then teaching, a late-Medieval literature class, for which there were almost no texts because the period at that time was so little known but which I advertised as being useful, because in it, in the course of the course, you would learn things and receive information that would guarantee you could one-up anyone at any academic cocktail party. You would know something that they didn't know, because no one had read these texts in the last 100 years. So I went on about one of these texts one day, it was probably something by Lydgate, or Hoccleve, and one of my students stood up and said, "How can you be talking about late Medieval literature when your students are being dragged down the steps of Sproul Hall?" And my answer was, "I don't need you to nominate my values," and went on discussing.

In one of my other classes, a survey class, the 46 class called the Survey of English Literature, the students picketed the class, but I held the class anyway and sent out coffee to the picketers. I was one of two professors in the English department who refused either to suspend class or give class over to discussion of these matters. The other was an Americanist by the name of Norman Grabo who had recently come from Michigan State.

Rubens: And your friend Stuart? Did he particularly work on you?

Fish: No, he later became a vice president of the Esalen Institute. He left the profession and, no doubt, was a huge success. He was very very smart, a brilliant man.

Rubens: But you, in fact, sound like you were having fun teaching. You found these students exciting, your work was exciting, and it was applicable. You said they could one-up people. But I imagine there was another reason you wanted them--

Fish: Well, I thought the work was interesting, yes. I taught texts and problems that seemed to me to be interesting for their own sake.

Rubens: You used the word performance, would you have used it then?

Fish: Oh yes, sure. I mean this is not the only mode of teaching. In fact, my wife has dedicated her life to, if not stamping it out, at least providing an alternative to it.

Rubens: What is the "it"?

- Fish: Performance teaching. Performance teaching is where you regard the class somewhat as a theatrical stage, and there's a drama which is pretty much directed by you even when you pretend that it's participatory. There is a script which you have and they don't, but you hope that they will fill in the appropriate roles as you've written them.
- Rubens: And were you aware of yourself vis-a-vis these other English department people? You said only one other did not use his classroom to talk about FSM. Were you known to have a strong feeling one way or another about the drama that was taking place?
- Fish: No, I didn't. An outsider would probably make this criticism that I was probably deficient in my appreciation of the gravity of the issues involved. I thought--and I still think--that this was an instance of class conflict in the sense that the students had certain desires and wished to be legitimated in certain ways. I could understand that from the perspective of a student. But I was not a student, I was a faculty member, and I couldn't understand why faculty members and administrators would self-identify with people whose interests were not their own. It didn't seem to me to make very much sense, which is why I didn't join the faculty union which formed in the next year or so.
- Rubens: Were you called upon at any time to vote as an English department faculty on whether you wanted the Academic Senate to take a look at what the issue was?
- Fish: I don't recall that the English department ever took such a vote, I may be mistaken. There were senate meetings, of course, famous ones, and I didn't go to any of them.
- Rubens: One other question as background to 1964--besides the political agitation at Yale, was there any political activity in your family background?
- Fish: No not at all. We had some people like Charles Muscatine in the English department, who had gone through the HUAC [House Un-American Activities Committee] hearings and had refused to take the [Loyalty] Oath. That was part of the legend and the lore of the campus.
- Rubens: You knew about it?
- Fish: Yes, I knew about that. I had not had any experience in the other institutions where I was either a student or where I had taught. I had a very strong interest in politics, the kind that I still have. I follow politics very closely. I read a great many political magazines. I have sometimes been on radio and television programs discussing political issues but never, myself,

except for the issue of affirmative action, gone out and worked in a political way.

- Rubens: And when you say except for affirmative action, do you mean subsequently?
- Fish: Yes, subsequently, that was in the nineties, I began to do that kind of work.
- Rubens: That's what I think is much more important to jump to especially given the time limit we have. How did you become particularly interested in issues of free speech later on? Did you have any particular opinion about California? You came from--
- Fish: Rhode Island.
- Rubens: Rhode Island, then Pennsylvania, then New Haven. Was there anything in your mind that led you to think life was not academically as serious here?
- Fish: Well, I felt that to some extent about Berkeley, not about the rest of California. Berkeley is a very politicized atmosphere, and that can either be extremely attractive or, as it was experienced by me, over-politicized. As I used to say, when I was in Berkeley, the trouble with living in Berkeley is that you cannot scratch your head, that is put your hand up in some ordinary posture, without someone thrusting a pamphlet into it. So in my years in Berkeley, I became increasingly irritated by this aspect of Berkeley society, which I'm quite aware is exactly what attracted many people to Berkeley. So when, oh, I forget when it was, in the late sixties or early seventies, the city of Berkeley set up traffic barriers in order to discourage people from driving down certain streets--in other words, in order to vote no against the twentieth century, or at least against the internal combustion engine. I thought, these people are wacky, these people are nuts!

I remember discussing this with the faculty union. The faculty union knew that I had not joined and this bothered them. So I was invited to a meeting of the board of directors or steering committee of the faculty union, and they wanted to know why hadn't I joined. I said "Well, what are your policies, what are your agenda items?" And they told me, I'll never forget this, they said, "Well, we would like to ban parking from campus. We would like to ensure student rights." There was a range of issues, including five or six national and foreign policy questions that they wished to pronounce on or agitate on. I said, "Well look, if I'm interested in a certain direction in national or foreign policy, the way I want to register that is by voting for one congress candidate rather than another?" And I

said, "I like to drive to campus. I'm not interested in public transportation, and I believe there should be more parking spaces. They should be in very tall garages." The third thing I said is, "Why would I want to pay dues to someone to agitate for student rights when I'm not a student? It's my rights and my pocketbook interests that I would expect a union to protect." At which point someone said, "You sir, do not belong in a university, you should join the Teamsters." To which, I don't know whether I did reply, but I'm sure in my mind I would have said, "You," meaning this union, probably a branch of the incredibly ineffectual AAUP, "would do better if you did join the Teamsters." So that would give you a sense of the way I felt myself not exactly at home in this particular atmosphere.

- Rubens: So you had no complaint and they obviously didn't raise at the time any issue about student/professor ratio or numbers of classes. These weren't on the agenda. Were they a concern for you?
- Fish: No, I probably didn't know enough about the way a university worked. I was interested in teaching my classes, writing whatever I was writing at the time-
- Rubens: You didn't feel oppressed by your job. It was the atmosphere?
- Fish: No, I wasn't oppressed, I wasn't even oppressed by the atmosphere, I was kind of amused by the atmosphere. All these people running around trying to make themselves feel needed and important.
- Rubens: To jump ahead, when would you say you finally left the campus, and did you go straight to Duke?
- Fish: No, I was actually at Berkeley from 1962 to 1974 and I had a leave, I remember I had a Guggenheim in '69. Then '73-4, I was a visiting professor at University of Southern California, and it was during that visiting year that I accepted a position at Johns Hopkins. So I accepted the position at Johns Hopkins in the spring of '74 and got to Johns Hopkins in the fall. I taught there until 1985.
- Rubens: You've had many high points in your career; enormously important publications; wide range of teaching experiences. And now you are the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois in Chicago –where I'm interviewing you today— all these years later. Are there ways that you can look back and see an evolution?
- Fish: Sure, evolution is not the word I would use. I would think of another word that I picked up from a great critic of Renaissance literature, Rosemund Tuve, who I think was the best critic of Renaissance literature we ever

had. She would talk about works that rather than developing, they exfoliated, opened up, so that as time went on you saw more and more of what they always were. That's the way I think of my own development; it's been not very progressive.

I've had the same idea and a half for ever and ever, and I keep on working it in slightly different ways. A book that I published in 1995 or '96 called *Professional Correctness* was an argument for the distinctiveness of tasks and an argument against the mixing of politics and the academy. And the argument was that certain kinds of skills and obligations come along with specific tasks, and that if you try to use your position in one task to perform in the arena of another, that is, for example, if you try to think of your literary criticism as a instrument for altering the political landscape of America, you would likely: a) be doing bad literary criticism, and b) be wholly ineffectual politically. That is part of the argument of *Professional Correctness*.

But I think you can see a fairly easy, if not facile, relationship between the position worked out in *Professional Correctness* and my stance back in 1962 and 1964. I looked around and saw all of these colleagues of mine scurrying to ally themselves with students. What I sensed back then is that academic scholars--especially scholars in the humanities and especially scholars in the field of literary studies always wish to be doing something other than what they do. Or, always need to believe that what they do--write and teach interpretations of literary works--has a consequence far beyond the ordinary or limited consequence of providing a new and powerful account of a work, or clearing up an ambiguity, or correcting a historical mistake. I suddenly found myself in a world where there were a bunch of people who called themselves literary critics, but didn't want written on their tombstone, "She produced the best reading of King Lear." What I want to say is that if it's not your aspiration to do something within the understood definition and confines of the task, but rather to do something else like improve the lot of Guatemalan peasants, then you should get out of this line of work and go down to Guatemala and work with the peasants. That was my position when I was in Berkeley in 1962 and '63 and '64 and '65 and '66 seeing all of this frenzied political activity. It was still my position six years ago when I published *Professional Correctness*.

Later, I became a professor of the law first in an adjunct capacity in the late seventies, and I was a professor of the law in a very serious way from '85 to '98, that is, I was a professor of law in the Duke law school.

Rubens: You literally earned a law degree?

- Fish: No, I had no law degree. I was a professor of law and I taught contracts, First Amendment law, legal theory, law of church and state. Those were the four things that I did.
- Rubens: Do you have somewhere where you've written why you focused on this, how you got into this?
- Fish: No, the answer is in some sense, accidental. I got into this because of an activity that I have been engaging in all my life up to the present and probably this evening--playing basketball. I was playing basketball with a colleague of mine in the English department at Johns Hopkins, and a friend of ours who was a lawyer teaching at the University of Maryland Law School. We would talk about what we were doing in our various professions and found there was a lot of overlap especially in the area of interpretation of disputed texts whether they were poems or cases or statutes. And then we did what academics always do when a confluence of interest is discovered; we taught a course together, the three of us. I got really interested in legal theory and the questions surrounding it, began to write a little bit about it, and entered into some controversies. You know, taught law courses, co-taught some.
- Rubens: So, when you talk about church-state relations, this has to do with First Amendment issues? I'm assuming Locke fits in there, if not Milton.
- Fish: That's right, well, it's from Locke to the present. It's first amendment issues on the religion clause side of the First Amendment, establishment and free exercise, which is all bound up in the relationship between the religious impulse and enlightenment liberalism. So for the last twenty years or so, almost twenty years, I've really been writing about enlightenment liberalism and what I take to be its inadequacies. That is the topic of the most recent published book, *The Trouble with Principle*.
- Rubens: That one I have. Would you draw a link in some way between the discursiveness, the unfolding of the method that you applied to these particular issues and that excited you about speech and Enlightenment liberalism? That process, the way you went at text etc, is that the same as how you felt about Milton?
- Fish: Oh I see what you mean, yes well, there is a more direct link, and that is, I've devoted much of my study of literary works to the seventeenth century, and especially to Milton, although to others, Herbert Dunne, Marvel, Bacon, Burton, Brown.
- Rubens: That's the Enlightenment yes?

Fish:

No, Enlightenment comes a little later, but one of Milton's famous prose works, the *Areopagitica* is usually cited in histories of First Amendment development as one of the two founding texts, even though Milton was not an American and wasn't alive when the First Amendment was written. The other is J.S. Mill's *On Liberty*. So Mill's *On Liberty* and Milton's *Areopagitica* are often cited by people who begin to write about the history of the First Amendment, and try to explain the power of first amendment values, freedom of expression, freedom of publication, free and open dialogue. Indeed Milton's *Aeropagitica* is a reasoned and passionate elaboration of the necessity and value of free expression. Three quarters of the way through, after having made most of the arguments in the treatise, he says, "of course when I talk about freely allowing the publication of divergent views, I don't mean Catholics, them we extirpate." Extirpate is a word that means pulling up by the roots, and destroying. And it is a direct line from that moment in the *Aeropagitica* to the title of my 1994 book, *There is No Such Thing as Free Speech, and It's a Good Thing Too*. It seemed to me that what Milton was pointing out was that anyone's notion of free speech, that which should be freely expressed, always proceeds against the assumed background of what you might call an original exclusion.

Free speech as a notion--this is going to sound paradoxical--only makes sense if you have already decided that some forms of speech should not be freely allowed. If you don't make that decision, then free speech is whatever content (or non-content) may emerge from the mouth or the pen or the typewriter or the computer of anyone. That is, if you really believe in free speech, what you are valuing is expression, in and of itself, independently of either its content or its possible effects on the world. For Milton, freedom of expression was a value, not in and of itself, but in the service of the higher value of facilitating the search for the truth. But, he pointed out, Catholic doctrine (as he understood it) is a brief against the unfettered search for the truth, and therefore if you allow freedom of publication and circulation by Catholics you are undermining the very reason that we have freedom of expression in the first place.

I often put this question to my students, "What is the First Amendment for?" That is, what is the purpose of the First Amendment? You get a whole bunch of answers--to allow the unfettered discovery of the truth, to allow the free flow of ideas in a democratic society, to make sure that citizens have sufficient information on which to base choices, or to immunize dissent from criminal prosecution by the powers that be. But then I say, after I've elicited these--all of which are very good historical answers, "Look, if you have *any* answer to the question, what is the First Amendment for, you are logically committed to censorship."

- Rubens: Why is that the case?
- Fish: If you have any answer whatsoever to the question “What is the First Amendment for?” you are logically committed, to censorship somewhere down the road. For if you believe that the First Amendment is *for* something, that it is there because you think it will bring about some state of affairs you believe to be desirable, then you must acknowledge the possibility that some forms of speech, rather than helping to bring about that desirable state of affairs, will in fact be subversive of it. At that moment you are going to have to censor or abridge that form of speech, and when you do so, you will not be violating the First Amendment; you will be honoring it by being faithful to the value it is intended to serve.
- The First Amendment historically, I think, was designed to prevent the government from criminalizing or stigmatizing or punitively reacting to criticism of itself. This by the way is exactly what Robert Bork argued in a famous 1971 law essay in the *Indiana Law Review*. He said, and I agree with him, that the original purpose of the First Amendment was to prevent government from outlawing criticism of itself. And all of this new stuff, about protection of pornography or commercial advertising or nude dancing or whatever it may be—he found that entirely without warrant in the historical record. And I quite agree with him.
- Rubens: Could you just clarify for me, maybe there are others who want to know this. Is the word *historicism* used against literary critics who have no sense of historical context, or is it a big kettle?
- Fish: It’s a big kettle. I think that the usual opposition, especially fifteen or twenty years ago, when the New Historicism was first being presented the usual opposition between historicism and aestheticism; that is between a form of criticism that attended to the text without asking questions about the historical conditions of its production and a form of criticism that took those conditions to be the appropriate object of analysis.
- Rubens: Or also, how the critical work may have absorbed some of the language of the political, without in fact conscientiously being political.
- Fish: That was also part of it. It was also an argument against what was thought to be the naive hermeticism of literary critics who thought that they could operate on a level isolated from the political.
- Rubens: I don’t know if it’s putting you too much in a bag, maybe in literary criticism we don’t do this, but it sounds like you partake of the New Historicism, but you might not make yourself one.

Fish:

Well, no, *Professional Correctness* is in part a critique of New Historicism, not of its analyses but of its claims. That is an extremely important distinction. New Historicism does produce powerful analyses of literary works. For example, early New Historicists focus particularly on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, because it seemed to them to be clearly an instance in which the important thing, or one important thing to know about *The Tempest* is that it's part of a colonialist discourse. The text becomes a way of thinking through the problematic of colonialism, and, also at the time of its writing and production, a way of participating in the discourse, the national discourse, about colonialism.

Now analyses like that seem to me to be powerful when they are done well. Certainly they should be appreciated and the skills that go along with writing such analyses should be valued and prized. The claim is that if you are doing that kind of work--as opposed to the old kind of Cleanth Brook work, where you took a fourteen-line sonnet and stayed within its confines—you were really engaging with the material conditions of the text's production. The idea was that aesthetic work, because of its distance from political considerations, was complicit with the orthodoxy and the powers that be, the status quo. So that if you were a certain kind of literary critic who wanted to talk let's say about line endings in Alexander Pope, you would not only be missing the incredible richness of the connections between the heroic couplet and what was going on in the larger society, but you would be contributing to the aestheticisation of literature and making sure that literary studies would always be aridly academic and not become an instrument of social progressive change.

The question is, are these New Historicist analyses powerful and illuminating? The answer has to be yes. At least when they are done by a skilled person. The second question is: is that mode of analysis one that enjoys a moral and political superiority over others? Does being a New Historicist make you a better person? Is it the case that if you are not a New Historicist and you cling to some version of formalism then you are in fact guilty of more forms of political complicity than can be listed? And my answer to that is nonsense, absolute nonsense. You are making a mistake--a mistake that for many students in literary criticism is the very reason for being--the mistake of confusing doing literary work with doing political work. It has been said that by doing a New Historicist analysis, lets say of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, (rather than doing an analysis of the *Faerie Queen* as a romance) you are in some way participating in the restructuring of your own society. Someone who has, in my view, committed several forms of the sins of pride, and failed to operate within the confines of his or her profession.

I always say, when people ask me, what's your idea of what literary critics or historians or anthropologists should be doing? The answer is simple: in the case of academics you go in and you teach your courses, you make sure that what you teach matches the description of the course in the catalogue, you give exams, you ask for papers, you actually correct the papers, you comment on them, and your goal at the end of the class, especially if it's a graduate course, is that every student should be capable of teaching it. As for its effect in the world, as to whether or not the students you teach will be moved to go out and work for—

Rubens: Protecting the rainforest—

Fish: Or anything like that, that's not within your control.

Rubens: Is there another aspect of the teaching that you also love and that engages you, and the work itself, not just the job of communicating, but something you said, about seeing kids excited?

Fish: Oh yes, absolutely. Sure.

Rubens: And that you were interested in teaching because there was a performance to it, was that because you like to be applauded, or--

Fish: Well, of course I do like to be applauded, who does not? Well, maybe there are some people who don't.

Rubens: But will you be applauded if your ideas fail? Don't you have to engage students where they are?

Fish: I'm not sure. What happens in successful teaching (when I've been able to teach successfully) students are alerted to the way language works in poetry and prose. And I can give you a very small example. One of George Herbert's poems is a poem about a first-person speaker who is trying to think through the relationship between himself and God--this is what all of Herbert's poems are about. The last line of the poem is, "By a sunbeam, I shall climb to thee." I point out, or get my students to see, that there is a double pun in sunbeam. The first is the obvious pun you find in almost all Renaissance texts, where sun, s-u-n, and son, meaning the son of God, Jesus Christ, is understood to be included in that sound. But beam, b-e-a-m, is also a reference to the cross. So the whole line, which indicates an action the speaker resolves to take, reports on an action already taken. So if you read the line in the double way which I think Herbert intends, you realize that the sunbeam, is both the goal and the means. That is, by sacrificing himself on the cross, Christ has effected the union between the individual and God, and that is what this individual in the poem seeks to

achieve himself, "By a sunbeam I shall climb to thee." The response being finally--although the line doesn't explicitly say this--this has already been done. It's been done before you, and for you, and there is nothing left for you to do. That is an extraordinary effect.

Rubens: And what is that effect?

Fish: It is a property of much poetry, where there is at once the sense the poem is making on the level of paraphrase and the sense it makes by virtue of puns, double meanings, multiple syntaxes, et cetera. I'm just trying to explain in the sunbeam example, how poets and novelists can do extraordinary things with language. That, for me, has always been the interest.

Rubens: I should pull our conversation back to the FSM. Did you ever read anything that Clark Kerr wrote?

Fish: Oh sure.

Rubens: Do you remember hearing him speak? Did you have any particular response?

Fish: No I didn't. I myself have become interested in university administration in later years, and I reread Clark Kerr along with others. I've come to believe something about the Clark Kerr model that I wouldn't have been able to articulate back in the sixties; that is, that it's a disastrous model. One of the things that made old universities work--not always in ways that were attractive--was the leadership of the university chancellors and presidents. Leadership of that kind is now a rare commodity. Many senior administrators today believe that they do their job by not exerting any strong influence on the day-to-day business of the university. That is why, on so many campuses, no one seems to be in charge.

End of interview