

# MODERN AGE

A QUARTERLY REVIEW



## *Leo Strauss and American Conservatism*

JOHN P. EAST

### I

LEO STRAUSS (1899-1973) was a native of Germany. "I was," he reported near the end of his life, "brought up in a conservative, even orthodox Jewish home somewhere in a rural district of Germany."<sup>1</sup> Strauss received his doctorate from Hamburg University in 1921. To escape the Nazi holocaust, in 1938 he emigrated to the United States and commenced teaching political science and philosophy at the New School for Social Research. Joining the faculty of the University of Chicago in 1949 as a professor of political philosophy, Strauss subsequently was named Robert Maynard Hutchins Distinguished Service Professor at that institution. After his retirement in 1968 from the University of Chicago, Strauss held teaching positions at Claremont Men's College in California and at St. John's College in Maryland. At the latter institution he was named Scott Buchanan Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence, and he held that position at the time of his death.

A prolific scholar, Strauss authored over a dozen books and in excess of eighty articles. Moreover, he spawned a generation of admiring students who have attained the highest ranks in the academic profession. One admirer eulogized, "At the Uni-

versity of Chicago his lectures at the Hillel Foundation were events. In a university that prided itself on intellectual distinction, he was widely regarded as most distinguished."<sup>2</sup> Another admirer offered, "He surely was the most learned man of our time in the great writings . . . worth being learned in. . ."<sup>3</sup> In particular, conservative intellectuals were enamored with Strauss' work. For example, Walter Berns succinctly explained, "He was the greatest of teachers."<sup>4</sup> In his assessment, Danto Germino concluded, "Strauss' impact on American philosophy and political science has been one of almost astonishing proportions."<sup>5</sup> With unreserved praise, Harry V. Jaffa wrote, "For us who have had the privilege of knowing him as a teacher and as a friend, we can only say that of the men we have known, he was the best, and the wisest and most just."<sup>6</sup> William F. Buckley, Jr. observed that Strauss "is unquestionably one of the most influential teachers of his age," while the always exacting Willmoore Kendall referred to Strauss as "*the* great teacher of political philosophy, not of our time alone, but of any time since Machiavelli."<sup>7</sup> Among Strauss' books, these having the greatest impact upon American conservative thought would include *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (1936), *Natural*

*Right and History* (1953), *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (1958), and *What Is Political Philosophy?* (1959). Concerning the latter two works, Kendall exclaimed, "Both of these should be not required reading but scripture for everyone who likes to think of himself as a conservative."<sup>8</sup>

What was the essence of this powerful spell that Leo Strauss cast over his students—nay, his disciples? His message was disarmingly simple. He commenced with this admonition:

However much the power of the West may have declined, however great the dangers of the West may be, that decline, that danger, nay, the defeat, even the destruction of the West would not necessarily prove that the West is in a crisis: the West could go down in honor, certain of its purpose. The crisis of the West consists in the West's having become uncertain of its purpose.<sup>9</sup>

The key to the resolution of the crisis lay in a restoration of the vital ideas and faith that in the past had sustained the moral purpose of the West. It was necessary to go back to the origins and to explore deeply the fundamental problems. Specifically, it was imperative to study the great thinkers of the past, be they teachers of good or evil, and to pore over their enduring works; it was essential to understand these thinkers as they understood themselves, and from that base the task of revitalization could commence. Who are the teachers of Good? They will be found, Strauss responded, in the classical Greek and biblical heritages; inescapably, the soul of the historical West is rooted in these intellectual traditions, and here are found the metaphysical foundations of what Strauss called "The Great Tradition" of Western politics.

## II

STRAUSS' affection for classical Greek political philosophy is a pervasive characteristic of all his work. Strauss cautioned that when a person "engages in the study of

classical philosophy he must know that he embarks on a journey whose end is completely hidden from him. He is not likely to return to the shores of our time as exactly the same man who departed from them."<sup>10</sup> Why study the classics? Strauss instructed, "It is not . . . antiquarianism nor . . . romanticism which induces us to turn . . . toward the political thought of classical antiquity. We are impelled to do so by the crisis of our time, the crisis of the West."<sup>11</sup> The fact that classical political philosophy had been replaced by modern utopian ideologies was, according to Strauss, "the core of the contemporary crisis of the West"; consequently, "the indispensable starting point" for rekindling the idea of "the very possibility of high culture" lay with a return to the classics.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Strauss concluded, "After the experience of our generation, the burden of proof would seem to rest on those who assert rather than on those who deny that we have progressed beyond the classics."<sup>13</sup>

A subtle yet key point in Strauss' affinity for the classical heritage is his preference for the Platonic emphasis over that of the Aristotelian. Although generally laudatory of Aristotle, it is in Plato that Strauss finds the *summum bonum* of classical political thought. Strauss elaborated:

Plato never discusses any subject . . . without keeping in view the elementary Socratic question, "What is the right way of life?" . . . Aristotle, on the other hand, treats each of the various levels of beings, and hence especially every level of human life, on its own terms.<sup>14</sup>

Or as Strauss wrote on another occasion, "Aristotle's cosmology, as distinguished from Plato's, is unqualifiedly separable from the quest for the best political order. Aristotelian philosophizing has no longer to the same degree and in the same way as Socratic philosophizing *the character of ascent*."<sup>15</sup>

"The character of ascent," Strauss contended, leads to The Great Tradition of political philosophy:

The Great Tradition of political philosophy was originated by Socrates. Socrates is said to have disregarded the whole of nature altogether in order to devote himself entirely to the study of ethical things. His reason seems to have been that while man is not necessarily in need of knowledge of the nature of all things, he must of necessity be concerned with how he should live individually and collectively.<sup>16</sup>

The ascent commences with acknowledgment that the highest calling of man is in the role of philosopher, for he alone relentlessly pursues “knowledge of the whole”—and it is essential to underscore that the quest is for knowledge (*episteme*), not opinion (*doxa*). The philosopher perceives a “nature of things” which is “intelligible” and “knowable,” and to a comprehension of the Truth of this whole he bends his will and talents. In keeping with the Socratic heritage, to Strauss the first step in seeking comprehension is *piety*: “The beginning of understanding is wonder or surprise, a sense of the bewildering or strange character of the subject matter.”<sup>17</sup> More simply, “[P]iety . . . emerges out of the contemplation of nature,” and in so doing man learns “to see the lowliness of his estate.”<sup>18</sup> In perceiving his lowliness, man is acknowledging a hierarchy of being. At the pinnacle of this hierarchy is transcendent Truth or the Good. To know the Truth, to go out of the Platonic cave and to know fully the essence of the sun, would be inexpressibly exhilarating and would be the ultimate in attainment and satisfaction for the philosopher. Needless to say, total comprehension of the whole, including the Truth at the pinnacle, eludes the full grasp of mortal man; yet, it is from knowing in the marrow of his intellectual being that the hierarchy of the whole exists that the philosopher is driven unrelentingly in pursuit of knowledge of the whole. To the philosopher the logic of the matter is inexorable: man is not self-produced; he is a part of a larger scheme of things; and no greater challenge

lies before man than to attempt to discern, however dimly, the essence of that whole.

As imperfect as our knowledge is, from the Platonic-Strauss perspective we have learned some truth; that is, there is such a thing as human knowledge, and, in fact, knowledge about important matters. For example, we know in our understanding of the whole that things have unalterable essences; more particularly, we know “that there is an unchangeable human nature.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, individual men have fixed natures that are not amenable to fundamental alteration or change. The initial task is to know ourselves, to perceive our fixed natures, and to attune ourselves accordingly. To the extent that we know our inner beings and accept our fixed essences as integral parts of the hierarchy of the whole, we have glimpsed the essence of classical Justice: “We shall then define justice as the habit of giving to everyone what is due to him according to nature.”<sup>20</sup> Conversely, “Justice means attending to one’s own business, bringing oneself into the right disposition with regard to the transcendent unchanging norm.”<sup>21</sup>

The political implications of classical Platonic thinking are profound. As a consequence of the general concern for ascent, piety, knowledge, truth, justice, and kindred concepts, the Platonic tradition stresses the quest for “the best political order”—the summit of the political hierarchy. As Strauss explained, the best political order entails government by “good men”:

The claim to rule which is based on merit, on human excellence, on “virtue,” appeared to be least controversial [in classical Platonic thought] . . . Good men are those who are willing, and able, to prefer the common interest to their private interest and to the objects of their passions, or those who, being able to discern in each situation what is the noble or right thing to do, do it because it is noble and right and for no ulterior reason.<sup>22</sup>

Thus virtue emerges as the controlling

ingredient in establishing the best political order: "[T]he chief purpose of the city is the noble life and therefore the chief concern of the city must be the virtue of its members. . . ." <sup>23</sup> And what is the hallmark of virtue?: "Pseudo-virtue seeks what is imposing and great, true virtue what is fitting and right." <sup>24</sup> Moreover, "Virtue is impossible without toil, effort, or repression of the evil in oneself." <sup>25</sup> Strauss summarized:

The classics had conceived of regimes (*politeiai*) not so much in terms of institutions as in terms of the aims actually pursued by the community or its authoritative part. Accordingly, they regarded the best regime as that regime whose aim is virtue. . . . <sup>26</sup>

It was then "the character, or tone, of a society" which was the key datum to the classical thinkers in the quest for the best regime. The cornerstone in building the best political order was the character of the individual. As the society was only the individual writ large, it was "the formation of character" in the individual that preoccupied the classical thinkers. Neither institutions, environmental changes, nor science, according to classical thought, were capable of redeeming man and ushering him into the political promised land. Indeed, it was beyond the potential of mortal man to redeem himself; however, he could seek the best attainable by aspiring to ascend and this required developing the intellectual and moral character of the individual.

There is the element of universalism in classical political thought: "By the best political order the classical philosopher understood that political order which is best always and everywhere. . . . 'The best political order' is, then, not intrinsically Greek: it is no more intrinsically Greek than health." <sup>27</sup> This quest for the finest universally is not to be confused with egalitarianism; in fact, it is the antithesis of egalitarianism: "But just as it may happen that the members of one nation are more

likely to be healthy and strong than those of others, it may also happen that one nation has a greater natural fitness for political excellence than others." <sup>28</sup> The concept of the hierarchy of things, that moving from lower to higher was an immutable component of classical thinking, and it indelibly etched an antiegalitarianism into classical political thought. Strauss observed, "The basic premise of classical political philosophy may be said to be the view that natural inequality of the intellectual powers is, or ought to be, of decisive political importance." <sup>29</sup> Similarly, he wrote, "The founding of the good city started from the fact that men are by nature different and this proved to mean that they are by nature of unequal rank." <sup>30</sup>

Although classical political thought sought an understanding of the ideal or best political order in order that man might aspire to ascend, it was categorically anti-utopian. Strauss explained, "The classics thought that, owing to the weakness or dependence of human nature, universal happiness is impossible, and therefore they did not dream of fulfillment of History. . . . [T]hey saw how limited man's power is. . . ." <sup>31</sup> In contrast to the utopian, Strauss noted,

[T]he philosopher . . . is free from the delusions bred by collective egotisms . . . . [H]e fully realizes the limits set to all human action and all human planning . . . , he does not expect salvation or satisfaction from the establishment of the simply best social order. <sup>32</sup>

Concisely stated, "The best regime and happiness, as classical philosophy understood them, are impossible." <sup>33</sup>

"Perhaps Socrates," Strauss speculated, "does not primarily intend to teach a doctrine but rather to educate human beings—to make them better, more just or gentle, more aware of their limitations." <sup>34</sup> In sum, classical political philosophy "is free from all fanaticism because it knows that evil cannot be eradicated and therefore that one's expectations from politics must be



moderate. The spirit which animates it may be described as serenity or sublime sobriety."<sup>35</sup> We return to that originating principle of piety, or as Strauss explained, "Classical political philosophy was liberal in the original sense."<sup>36</sup> Conversely, Strauss concluded, "The classics were for almost all practical purposes what now are called conservatives."<sup>37</sup>

### III

IN STRAUSS' thinking the Judeo-Christian heritage is the second pillar of the Great Tradition of political philosophy. Unequivocally, he found the religious tradition of the West as vital to the Great Tradition as he did the classical heritage. Revealing of Strauss' affinity for the religious basis of Western thought is his intense admiration of Moses Maimonides, described by Strauss, as "the greatest Jewish thinker of the Middle Ages."<sup>38</sup> Maimonides' major work was *The Guide for the Perplexed*, which is directed, Strauss explained, "[T]o those believing Jews who have, by reason of their training in philosophy, fallen into doubt and perplexity. . . ."<sup>39</sup> Or as Maimonides himself wrote:

I address those who have studied philosophy and have acquired some knowledge, and who while firm in religious matters are perplexed and bewildered on account of the ambiguous and figurative expressions employed in the holy writings.<sup>40</sup>

Did Strauss feel that Maimonides had been successful in resolving this perplexity? Strauss answered, "*The Guide* as a whole is not merely a key to a forest but is itself a forest, an enchanted forest, and hence also an enchanting forest: it is a delight to the eyes. For the tree of life is a delight to the eyes."<sup>41</sup>

Maimonides "is the Jewish counterpart" of St. Thomas Aquinas: "Maimonides reconciles reason and revelation by identifying the distinctive aim of . . . divine law, with the aim of philosophy."<sup>42</sup> Regarding

their respective emphases upon the classical heritage, Strauss noted a basic difference between Aquinas and Maimonides:

For Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle is the highest authority . . . in political philosophy. Maimonides, on the other hand, could not use Aristotle's *Politics*, since it had not been translated into Arabic or Hebrew; but he could start, and he did start, from Plato's political philosophy.<sup>43</sup>

Thus Maimonides did out of necessity what Strauss had done by choice: both drew more heavily from Platonic than Aristotelian thought. Maimonides was able to harmonize the Platonic and Judaic traditions, Strauss related, for both heritages sought the Ideal; specifically, Judaism became the "perfect law in the Platonic sense" of the Ideal.<sup>44</sup>

Strauss' admiration for Maimonides takes on a particularly important dimension in view of the deep religious orthodoxy of Maimonides. In Strauss' words: "The remedy for this perplexity [the perplexity the philosopher has about religion] is the . . . explanation . . . that restores the faith in the truth of the Bible, that is, precisely what Maimonides is doing in *The Guide*."<sup>45</sup> The basic tenet of Maimonides' thinking is rooted in Platonic-Biblical piety: "Maimonides finds . . . that given man's insignificance compared with the universe man's claim to be the end for which the world exists is untenable."<sup>46</sup> According to Maimonides, "human reason is inadequate for solving the central problem"; consequently, he affirms the indispensability of revealed religion.<sup>47</sup> As Strauss concisely stated the matter: "Maimonides defines his position by two frontiers. In the face of orthodoxy he defends the right of reason, in the face of philosophy he directs attention to the bounds of reason."<sup>48</sup>

Profoundly significant in terms of impact upon Strauss' professional career was the approach in studying scripture recommended by Maimonides. Maimonides offered these maxims: "The deeper sense of

the words of the holy Law are pearls, and the literal acceptance of a figure is of no value in itself"; "Their *hidden meaning*, however, is profound wisdom, conducive to the recognition of real truth"; and "Your object should be to discover . . . the general idea which the author wishes to express."<sup>49</sup> As to reading *The Guide*, Maimonides requested, "*Do not read superficially, lest you do me an injury, and derive no benefit for yourself. You must study thoroughly and read continually; for you will then find the solution to those important problems of religion, which are a source of anxiety to all intelligent men.*"<sup>50</sup> Maimonides then concluded with an observation which Strauss could only relish:

Lastly, when I have a difficult subject before me—when I find the road narrow, and can see no other way of teaching a well established truth except by pleasing one intelligent man and displeasing ten thousand fools—I prefer to address myself to the one man, and to take no notice whatever of the condemnation of the multitude; I prefer to extricate that intelligent man from his embarrassment and show him the cause of his perplexity, so that he may attain perfection and be at peace.<sup>51</sup>

The technique of study advocated by Strauss in his professional career is unmistakably vintage Maimonides. There is that emphasis upon careful textual analysis in which one eschews literalism and looks for the "deeper sense" and "the hidden meaning." In addition, as noted, there is that strong Platonic-biblical willingness, if necessary, to ignore "the multitude" and "to address" oneself to "one intelligent man." Indeed, the point is compelling: Strauss not only drank deeply of the substance of Maimonides' thought, he not only attempted to reconcile the classical and biblical views, but in addition he borrowed extravagantly from Maimonides' method of study, and it is not too much to say that he cast himself in the role of a modern Maimonides.

Further underscoring Strauss' commitment to the biblical heritage, is his disdain for Spinoza. Maimonides and Spinoza were both of Jewish heritage. The former was devoted to preserving the biblical roots, while the latter through his major work, *Theologico-political Treatise*, sought to free himself and his readers from biblical guidance. Strauss was lavish in his praise of Maimonides, and unsparingly critical in his analysis of Spinoza. Strauss wrote, "Spinoza rejects both Greek idealism and Christian realism. . . . Spinoza's God is simply beyond good and evil. . . . Good and evil differ only from a merely human point of view; theologically the distinction is meaningless."<sup>52</sup> Spinoza's initial error is to reject the classical-biblical concept of piety: "To humility Spinoza opposes composure of mind as the joy that springs when man contemplates himself and his power of action."<sup>53</sup> Having rejected piety, Spinoza, according to Strauss, called for "an open attack on all forms of orthodox biblical theology."<sup>54</sup> Spinoza "denies revealed religion" and rejects outright the biblical conception of sin:

Does there exist [in Spinoza's thinking], apart from all humanly constituted law, a law plainly imposed on all men, and of which transgression is sin? Is there human action which contravenes the will of God? For Spinoza, this is the question regarding the *lex divina*, and to the question understood in this sense his answer is No.<sup>55</sup>

As Strauss explained even more succinctly, "Spinoza's real view [is that] every man and every being has a natural right to everything; the state of nature knows no law and knows no sin."<sup>56</sup>

Strauss continued, "Spinoza . . . charges full tilt . . . with the wholehearted scorn of the realist free of illusions who knows the world."<sup>57</sup> According to Spinoza, Strauss noted, the error of religion is that it causes man to place "his trust in others rather than in himself, rather than in his own powers of rational reflection. . . ."<sup>58</sup> Thus,

unlike Maimonides, Spinoza was "convinced . . . of the adequacy of human capacities for the guidance of life," and he demanded of "Judaism that it should justify itself before the tribunal of reason, of humanity."<sup>59</sup> In sum, Spinoza, "taking his stand on the unambiguous evidence and of reason," points directly to the mind and spirit of the Enlightenment:

Interest in security and in alleviation of the ills of life may be called the interest characteristic of the Enlightenment in general. This movement sought in every way open to it to assure greater security and amelioration of life. . . . Nothing could be more odious to the Enlightenment than the conception of God as a terrible God, in which the severity of mind and heart, and the spirit of the Book of Deuteronomy, finds its ultimate justification.<sup>60</sup>

What is the end result of Spinoza's view?: "[T]he humanitarian end seems to justify every means; he plays a most dangerous game; his procedure is as much beyond good and evil as his God."<sup>61</sup> More specifically, Strauss wrote, "The explicit thesis of the *Theologico-political Treatise* may be said to express an extreme version of the 'liberal' view," and thus Spinoza ultimately "found his home in the liberal secular state."<sup>62</sup>

Not only in his differing reactions to Maimonides and Spinoza does one see the religious facet of Strauss' thinking. In stating directly his personal views, Strauss reveals a deeply religious dimension. Note this somewhat cryptic remark: "It is true that the successful quest for wisdom [that is, philosophy] might lead to the result that wisdom is not the one thing needful."<sup>63</sup> Extensively throughout his work Strauss employs this biblical phrase, "the one thing needful." And is there any doubt as to the religious implications of this statement by Strauss?: "The insecurity of man and everything human is not an absolutely terrifying abyss if the highest of which a man knows is absolutely secure."<sup>64</sup> Strauss con-

tended that reason is inadequate for a comprehensive explanation, for it "knows only of subjects and objects."<sup>65</sup> Similarly, naturalism is inadequate, for it "is completely blind to the riddles inherent in the 'givenness' of nature," and finally "humanism is not enough. . . . Either man is an accidental product of a blind evolution or else the process leading to man, culminating in man, is directed toward man. Mere humanism avoids this ultimate issue."<sup>66</sup>

The answer lay Strauss reasoned, "Only by surrendering to God's experienced call which calls for one's loving Him with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's might can one come to see the other human being as one's brother and love him as oneself."<sup>67</sup> In addition, Strauss cautioned, "The absolute experience will not lead back to Judaism . . . if it does not recognize itself in the Bible and clarify itself through the Bible. . . ."<sup>68</sup> Concerning the Bible, Strauss wrote, "[I]t is true . . . I believe . . . that the Bible sets forth the demands of morality and religion in their purest and most intransigent form . . ." and he further reflected, "[T]he orthodox answer rests upon the belief in the superhuman origin of the Bible."<sup>69</sup> Strauss charged that without "biblical faith" it was not possible to see "human beings . . . with humility and charity. . . ."<sup>70</sup> Moreover, men of "unbelief" are "haunted men. Deferring to nothing higher than their selves, they lack guidance. They lack thought and discipline. Instead they have what they call sincerity."<sup>71</sup> Strauss continued with this profoundly religious observation: "One can create obstinacy by virtue of some great villainy, but one needs religion for creating hope."<sup>72</sup> Compelling is this final observation, "The genuine refutation of orthodoxy would require the proof that the world and human life are perfectly intelligible without the assumption of a mysterious God."<sup>73</sup> There is no question that Strauss looked upon biblical knowledge of this "mysterious God" as an indispensable step toward "knowledge of the whole."

Although his personal heritage was Jewish, there is not a trace of antagonism in Strauss' writing toward Christianity; indeed, probably the most moving dimension of Strauss' thinking was his effort to afford "recognition of that common ground" between Judaism and Christianity:

What can such recognition mean? This much: that Church and Synagogue recognize in each the noble features of its antagonist. Such recognition was possible even during the Christian Middle Ages; while the Synagogue was presented as lowering its head in shame, its features were presented as noble. . . . Even the pagan philosophers Plato and Aristotle remained friends . . . because each held the truth to be his greatest friend. The Jew may recognize that the Christian error is a blessing, a divine blessing, and the Christian may recognize that the Jewish error is a blessing, a divine blessing. Beyond this they cannot go without ceasing to be Jew or Christian.<sup>74</sup>

In pursuing his "common-ground" theme, Strauss argued:

The common ground on which Jews and Christians can make a friendly *collatio* to the secular state cannot be the belief in the God of the philosophers, but only the belief in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God who revealed the Ten Commandments or at any rate such commandments as are valid under all circumstances regardless of the circumstances.<sup>75</sup>

As Strauss viewed it, "The agony of the Jew and the agony of the Cross belong together; 'they are aspects of the same agony.' Judaism and Christianity need each other."<sup>76</sup> Thus to Strauss it was essential to understand that "over against scientism and humanism Judaism and Christianity are at one."<sup>77</sup>

Beyond "the common-ground" argument, Strauss wrote with affection for the specifically Christian contributions to Western

thought. For example, regarding Catholicism he observed:

Anyone who wishes to judge impartially of the legitimacy or the prospects of the great design of modern man to erect the City of Man on what appears to him to be ruins of the City of God must familiarize himself with the teachings, and especially the political teachings, of the Catholic church, which is certainly the most powerful antagonist of that modern design.<sup>78</sup>

Be it in their "common ground" or in their separate contributions, he spoke then approvingly of the Jewish and Christian heritages. It is to be cautioned that Strauss was not advocating a maudlin ecumenical synthesis of Judaism and Christianity. Strauss insisted, as noted, that beyond "the common ground" neither faith could go "without ceasing to be Jew or Christian." Strauss did not conceive it as the task of mortals to dilute the essence of either faith; to attempt to do so would reflect impiety in its rankest form.

#### IV

To STRAUSS the issue was clear: "Western man became what he is and is what he is through the coming together of biblical faith and Greek thought. In order to understand ourselves and to illuminate our trackless way into the future, we must understand Jerusalem and Athens."<sup>79</sup> As had Maimonides and Aquinas, Strauss saw, in spite of certain irreconcilable antagonisms, a mutuality of interest between "Plato and the prophets." To commence with, both the classical and biblical heritages renounced human pride or *hybris* and commended piety as the key virtue: "According to the Bible, the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord; according to the Greek philosophers, the beginning of wisdom is wonder."<sup>80</sup> Moreover, as a corollary premise, Strauss noted both traditions "made very strict demands on self-restraint. Neither biblical nor classical morality encourages

us to try, solely for the sake of our preferment or our glory, to oust from their positions men who do the required work as well as we could."<sup>81</sup> Similarly, "Neither biblical nor classical morality encourages all statesmen to try to extend their authority over all men in order to achieve universal recognition."<sup>82</sup>

In addition to instructing on the virtues of piety and self-restraint, "Plato teaches, just as the Bible, that heaven and earth were created or made by an invisible God whom he calls the Father, who is always, who is good and hence whose creation is good."<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, in biblical and classical thought "justice is compliance with the natural order" of creation.<sup>84</sup> The wisdom of Jerusalem and Athens requires discernment of the natural order of things and man's attuning himself to that order. That is, man is not the Creator, he is the creature; he is not the potter, he is the clay. It is then man who adapts to creation, not creation to man—to propose the latter is to propose perverting the natural order of things. On these essentials, on the essence of God, creation, and Justice, Plato and the prophets were as one.

In his analysis of the "coming together" of the wisdom of Jerusalem and Athens, Strauss cautioned, "Yet the differences between the Platonic and the biblical teaching are no less striking than the agreements."<sup>85</sup> First, there is the inescapable problem of "the opposition of Reason and Revelation." By its essence Reason accepts as true only that which has withstood the probing power of human logic and scientific understanding. In contrast, by its nature Revelation assumes there are truths beyond the intelligence of man to grasp. Man is finite and limited in his understanding; therefore, those ineffable truths beyond the ken of human reason are knowable only through Revelation. Thus the clear thinker yields: from the human vantagepoint, because of their respective essences, Reason and Revelation are not fully reconcilable.

Likewise, Jerusalem and Athens take opposing positions on the fundamental ques-

tion of whether we are pursuing truth or whether we already possess truth. Strauss explained:

The philosopher is the man who dedicates his life to the quest for knowledge of the good, of the idea of the good. . . . According to the prophets, however, there is no need for the quest for knowledge of the good: God "has shewed thee, o man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."<sup>86</sup>

Plato and prophets are agreed that truth is the goal, but by the very nature of their differing perspectives, the clear thinker again concedes that from the standpoint of human understanding complete reconcilability is not possible; differing essences cannot be forced into a common mold; to attempt to do so does violence and irreparable harm to the vital nature of each.

As he had done in his efforts to find "the common ground" between Judaism and Christianity, so Strauss had done in his analysis of the classical and biblical views. He looked for the mutual foundations and artfully defined and boldly asserted them; however, he resolutely refused to force either component into an unnatural synthesis of human design. The essence of things had to be respected. The philosopher-theologian could carry the matter of synthesis to the highest level possible consistent with his understanding of the nature of things; yet, it was gross error—perversion—to force the unnatural union of differing essences. We would have to learn to reconcile ourselves to the irreconcilable. This was acceptable to learned men, for classical and biblical piety had instructed it was not in the nature of things that mortal man should have total knowledge of the whole.

## V

THE CARDINAL ERROR of modern ideologies was to war against the nature of things, and to attempt to superimpose a strictly new

design solely human in origin. With the thinking of the Renaissance, Strauss wrote, commenced the heresies of modernity: "[W]ithin the Renaissance an entirely new spirit emerged, the modern secular spirit. The greatest representative of this radical change was Machiavelli. . . ."87 In Machiavelli, Strauss contended, lay the theoretical foundations of the modern age:

The founder of modern political philosophy is Machiavelli. He tried to effect, and he did effect, a break with the whole tradition of political philosophy. He compared his achievement to that of men like Columbus. He claimed to have discovered a new moral continent. His claim is well founded; his political teaching is "wholly new." The only question is whether the new continent is fit for human habitation.<sup>88</sup>

Machiavelli launched the "first wave of modernity" as he broke sharply with the classical and biblical heritages, as he broke with the Great Tradition of Western political thought. Regarding Machiavelli's break with the classical tradition, Strauss observed, "Machiavelli refers so rarely to philosophy and philosophers: in the *Prince* and the *Discourses* taken together there occurs only one reference to Aristotle and one reference to Plato."<sup>89</sup> Concerning the key concept of piety in classical thinking, Strauss noted, "[O]ne does not find a trace of pagan piety in Machiavelli's work."<sup>90</sup> Similarly, "Wisdom is not a great theme for Machiavelli because justice is not a great theme for him"; consequently, there is "a movement from excellence to vileness" as Machiavelli, in departing from the classical view, "denies that there is an order of the soul, and therefore a hierarchy of ways of life or of goods."<sup>91</sup> In repudiating the classical view, Machiavelli denied "the possibility of a *summum bonum*," and thereby "Machiavelli abandoned the original meaning of the good society or of the good life."<sup>92</sup> The "character of ascent," characteristic of classical thought, is destroyed by Machiavelli.

Nor, Strauss continued, is Machiavelli any less devastating in his attack upon the biblical tradition. In his clever and subtle attack upon the biblical legacy, Machiavelli employs a conspiracy of silence: "He silently makes superficial readers oblivious of the biblical teaching."<sup>93</sup> "As one would expect," Strauss explained, "Machiavelli is silent about God's witnessing or the relation between the conscience and God."<sup>94</sup> Moreover, in neither *The Prince* or *The Discourses* does Machiavelli make a "distinction between this world and the next, or between this life and the next; nor does he mention in either work the devil or hell; above all, he never mentions in either work the soul."<sup>95</sup> On this latter point, Strauss concluded, "[H]is silence about the soul is a perfect expression of the soulless character of his teaching: he is silent about the soul because he has forgotten the soul, just as he has forgotten tragedy and Socrates."<sup>96</sup> Thus "Machiavelli unambiguously reveals his complete break with the biblical tradition, and . . . he ascribes to all religions a human, not a heavenly, origin."<sup>97</sup> Briefly, Machiavelli "is certain that the Christian religion will not last forever. It is [merely] 'the present religion.'"<sup>98</sup>

The cleavage between Machiavelli and Christianity is sharply reflected in fundamentally differing attitudes on the meaning of "virtue." To Machiavelli virtue (*virtù*), properly understood, meant the pursuit of worldly power and honor. As Strauss elaborated, "Not trust in God and self-denial but self-reliance and self-love is the root of human strength and greatness."<sup>99</sup> Succinctly, "God is with the strongest battalions."<sup>100</sup> In contrast, to Machiavelli Christian virtue had "led the world into weakness . . . by lowering the esteem for worldly glory [and by] regarding humility, abjectness and contempt for things human as the highest good."<sup>101</sup> In summing up Machiavelli's position, Strauss wrote, "The sins which ruin states are military rather than moral sins. On the other hand, faith, goodness, humility, and patience may be the road to ruin, as everyone under-

standing anything of the things of the world will admit."<sup>102</sup> Machiavelli was indifferent to the truth of the biblical view; he proceeded to substitute politics for religion; and in his "spiritual warfare" on the historical faiths of the West he raised a banner which proclaimed "there is no sin but ignorance."<sup>103</sup> Had Machiavelli's assault upon the established faiths succeeded? Strauss retorted, "The problem posed by biblical antiquity remains behind him like an unconquered fortress."<sup>104</sup>

Yet in spite of his failure to convince Strauss, the latter acknowledged the powerful impact Machiavelli has had upon the modern mind. Machiavelli was a bold "innovator" who sought to discover "new modes and orders" in the moral realm. He was "a rebel against everything that is respected," and he "liberated himself completely from belief in any authority."<sup>105</sup> Indeed, he attempted to establish a new authority spun from wholly new cloth. This new authority was rooted in Machiavelli's well-known proclamation "that all armed prophets have conquered and unarmed ones failed." This meant, Strauss explained, that

the primacy of Love must be replaced by the primacy of Terror. . . . Therefore the perfection envisaged by both the Bible and classical philosophy is impossible. . . . Man cannot rise above earthly and earthy humanity and therefore he ought not even to aspire beyond humanity.<sup>106</sup>

In Machiavelli is found then an "attempt to replace humility by humanity," and the practical result is "to lower man's goal."<sup>107</sup> The purpose in lowering the goal is "to increase the probability of its attainment."<sup>108</sup> The new standard is "low but solid" and "its symbol is the Beast Man as opposed to the God Man: it understands man in the light of the sub-human rather than of the super-human."<sup>109</sup> Machiavelli's conception of the Beast Man leads to the threshold of modern tyranny which "has its roots in Machiavelli's thought."<sup>110</sup> Ironically, Strauss observed, "A stupendous contraction of the

horizon appears to Machiavelli and his successors as a wondrous enlargement of the horizon."<sup>111</sup>

In reference to *The Prince*, Strauss wrote, "The characteristic feature of the work is precisely that it makes no distinction between prince and tyrant: it uses the term 'prince' to designate princes and tyrants alike."<sup>112</sup> In Machiavelli's own words:

[F]or how we live is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation. . . . Therefore it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good. . . .<sup>113</sup>

In pursuing worldly honor and the praise of men, Machiavelli further instructed that the prince "must imitate the fox and the lion," must, that is, alternate between cunning and violence, and "in the actions of princes, from which there is no appeal, the end justifies the means. Let a prince therefore aim at conquering and maintaining the state. . . ."<sup>114</sup> Strauss summed up Machiavelli's instructions to the fledgling prince-tyrant: "He must pursue a policy of iron and poison, of murder and treachery. . . . [T]he patriotic end hallows every means however much condemned by the most exalted traditions both philosophic and religious."<sup>115</sup> "There can be no doubt regarding the answer," Strauss concluded, "the immoral policies recommended throughout the *Prince* are not justified on grounds of the common good, but exclusively on grounds of the self-interest of the prince, of his selfish concern with his own well-being, security and glory."<sup>116</sup>

An additional result in Machiavelli's "lowering the goal" is that he "replaces God . . . by Fortuna."<sup>117</sup> "Fortuna is malevolent," Strauss explained, and she "mysteriously elects some men or nations for glory and others for ruin or infamy."<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, "[T]he end which Fortuna pursues is unknown, and so are her ways

toward that end.”<sup>119</sup> In brief, Fortuna is what is conventionally called chance, and she is the essence of human existence. Unlike the classical and biblical views, Machiavelli sees no hierarchy of order, nor does he perceive that things have essences and substances, that there is a “nature of things” independent of man’s will. From the classical-biblical perspective man is a vital component of the whole, but he is not creator of the whole, nor does he have full dominion over it. The matter is otherwise with Machiavelli Strauss noted, for “Fortuna is like a woman who can be vanquished by the right kind of man.” Thus “if Fortuna can be vanquished, man would seem to be able to become the master of the universe. Certainly Machiavelli does not recommend that Fortuna be worshipped: she ought to be beaten and pounded.”<sup>120</sup> As Machiavelli himself explained, in the case of “great men . . . fortune holds no sway over them.”<sup>121</sup>

If fortune holds no sway over man as Machiavelli proclaimed, and “if there is no natural end of man” in the Machiavellian view, then Strauss maintained, “[M]an can set for himself almost any end he desires: man is almost infinitely malleable. The power of man is much greater, and the power of nature and chance is correspondingly much smaller, than the ancients thought.”<sup>122</sup> And what are the practical implications of the notion that man is “infinitely malleable”? Strauss elaborated:

Machiavelli takes issue with those who explain the bad conduct of men by their bad nature: men are by nature malleable rather than either bad or good; goodness and badness are not natural qualities but the outcome of habituation.

[Thus] what you need is not so much formation of character and moral appeal, as the right kind of institutions, institutions with teeth in them. The shift from formation of character to the trust in institutions is the characteristic corollary of the belief in the almost infinite malleability of man.<sup>123</sup>

It was to “the young” that Machiavelli took his call to join with him, as with a bold Columbus, in establishing “new modes and orders” and in settling a new “moral continent.” Machiavelli stated, “I certainly think that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman. . . . And therefore like a woman, she is always a friend to the young, because they are less cautious, fiercer, and master her with greater audacity.”<sup>124</sup> “Machiavelli tries,” Strauss continued, “to divert the adherence of the young from the old to the new teaching by appealing to the taste of the young,” and thereby “he displays a bias in favor of the impetuous, the quick, the partisan, the spectacular, and the bloody over and against the deliberate, the slow, the neutral, the silent, and the gentle.”<sup>125</sup> In Machiavelli’s thought, Strauss reasoned, “Reason and youth and modernity rise up against authority, old age, and antiquity.” The result is “the birth of that greatest of all youth movements: modern philosophy. . . .”<sup>126</sup>

In *The Prince* Machiavelli instructed youth with this superficial and callow doctrine: “Only those defences are good, certain and durable, which depend on yourself alone and your own ability.”<sup>127</sup> “Machiavelli thus establishes,” Strauss wrote, “a kind of intimacy with his readers par excellence, whom he calls ‘the young,’ by inducing them to think forbidden or criminal thoughts.”<sup>128</sup> Strauss asked, “How can we respect someone who remains undecided between good and evil or who, while benefiting us, benefits at the same time and by the same action our worst enemies?”<sup>129</sup> “If it is true,” Strauss maintained, “that only an evil man will stoop to teach maxims of public and private gangsterism, we are forced to say that Machiavelli was an evil man.”<sup>130</sup> After all, Machiavelli himself had proclaimed in *The Discourses* that “evil deeds have a certain grandeur.”<sup>131</sup> In sum, the Florentine is “a teacher of evil,” and it is only “the incredibility of his enterprise which secures him against detection, i.e., against the detection of the intransigence and awakens with which he con-



ducts his exploration of hitherto unknown territory and thus prepares the conquest of that territory by his brothers."<sup>132</sup>

## VI

ALTHOUGH Machiavelli had laid the primary theoretical foundations, Strauss considered Thomas Hobbes as one of those "brothers" assisting in launching the "first wave of modernity." In fact, earlier in his writing career Strauss had viewed Hobbes as the key figure in introducing modern Western thought; however, subsequently, he wrote, "Hobbes appeared to me [earlier] as the originator of modern political philosophy. This was an error: not Hobbes, but Machiavelli, deserves this honor."<sup>133</sup> "It was Machiavelli, that greater Columbus" Strauss decided, "who had discovered the continent on which Hobbes could erect his structure."<sup>134</sup> To understand this "structure" erected by Hobbes, it was imperative, Strauss instructed, that "the fundamental difference" between Hobbes' thinking "and the classical as well as the Christian attitude should be grasped."<sup>135</sup> Succinctly stated, it was essential to understand that "the shifting of interest from the eternal order to man . . . carried to its logical conclusion . . . leads to Hobbes' political philosophy."<sup>136</sup> As had Machiavelli, Hobbes broke completely with the Great Tradition of Western thought.

Under the tutelage of Plato, the classical perspective yearned for "the truth hidden in the natural valuations and therefore [sought] to teach nothing new and unheard-of"; rather, it sought to discover and articulate the "old and eternal." In contrast, Hobbes lusted after the "future and freely projected"; he searched for the "surprising new, unheard-of-venture."<sup>137</sup> Hobbes then, at war with the classical legacy, unleashed a violent outpouring of the modern spirit. He denied the notion of the soul, and he rejected the idea that there was a supreme good. Moreover, he denied the concept of the natural law; he repudiated the notion that there was an order of being and

that there was a hierarchy of value and gradation in the nature of things. Likewise, Hobbes renounced any ideal of an objective moral order, that justice could be perceived, and that there was a natural end of man. As Strauss reported it, Hobbes was "elated by a sense of the complete failure of traditional philosophy."<sup>138</sup>

Hobbes turned with comparable vehemence on the biblical heritage, and Strauss maintained, he preached a doctrine of "political atheism." As to the Christian tradition, Hobbes differed with it "by his denial of the possibility that just and unjust actions may be distinguished independently of human legislation."<sup>139</sup> To Hobbes man "has no reason to be grateful to the 'First Cause' of [the] universe," and "there is then no reason for believing in the authority of the Bible."<sup>140</sup> Thus "unbelief is the necessary premise of his teaching about the state of nature."<sup>141</sup> Shockingly, in Hobbes' hands impiety is converted into a virtue.

According to Strauss, Hobbes taught a corollary doctrine of "political hedonism." In the Hobbesian scheme of things, death is "the primary and greatest and supreme evil, the only and absolute standard of human life, the beginning of all knowledge of the real world."<sup>142</sup> As fear of death is the primary evil, it follows that "self-preservation" is the most basic of all rights, particularly self-preservation against violent death. In effect Hobbes upended the classical and biblical heritages and made self-preservation the *summum bonum* of the human experience; thus the ultimate sacrifices of self by Socrates and Christ in the pursuit of truth become odious perversions—evil—in the Hobbesian view. Self-preservation is the supreme Right; it is the foundation of political morality, and it is antecedent to all things political. Classical and biblical notions of duty, service, and sacrifice to higher transcendent callings are summarily rejected. The Hobbesian goddess is sovereign power, for she alone can offer security against violent death, the supreme evil. Strauss wrote, "[O]ne may call Hobbes' whole philosophy the first phi-

losophy of power."<sup>143</sup> He did find a nuance of difference between Hobbes and Machiavelli: "[W]hereas the pivot of Machiavelli's political teaching was glory, the pivot of Hobbes' political teaching is power."<sup>144</sup> Power and glory emerge then as key pillars of modern thought; they stand in stark contrast to the classical-biblical notions of piety and service.

After Machiavelli and Hobbes, Strauss maintained, "The second wave of modernity begins with Rousseau. He changed the moral climate of the west as profoundly as Machiavelli."<sup>145</sup> Rousseau unleashed the romantic radical spirit of modern Jacobinism. Whereas Machiavelli and Hobbes had subtly (and even on occasion gracefully) undermined the Great Tradition, Rousseau with glee and bravado wielded the ideological sword against the classical-biblical heritage. He was obscenely impious: he repudiated God and reason and declared human passion as the center and measure of all things. Through Rousseau's concept of the General Will, which is no more than collectivized human passion, we see erected the modern idol of collective man. The wreckage lies all around and the end of the destruction is not yet in sight. Strauss concluded, "[T]he restitution of a sound approach is bound up with the elimination of Rousseau's influence."<sup>146</sup>

Upon the heels of Rousseau, Strauss asserted, Nietzsche ushered in "the third wave of modernity." At least in Rousseau there had been the potentially redeeming virtue of the "noble savage" exuding compassion in his tranquil and blissful state of nature. However, Nietzsche offered no redeeming virtue; rather, he raised the preaching of evil to the nth power. He struck savagely at the twin pillars of the Great Tradition; with barbaric frenzy and sadistic pleasure he openly and explicitly condemned Jerusalem and Athens. The heritage of Plato was rejected out-of-hand because of its emphasis upon reason in the pursuit of the Good. As had Rousseau, Nietzsche turned from reason to sentiment and passion, and he repudiated categori-

cally any notion of an existing transcendent Good. Rather than the "character of ascent" of the classical view, Nietzsche led to descent into the world of the animal—the beast. In speaking of man, Nietzsche had written, "[The] hidden core needs to erupt from time to time, the animal has to get out again and go back to the wilderness."<sup>147</sup> In the same breath, Nietzsche renounced the biblical view by declaring "God is dead." In addition, he uttered the heretofore unthinkable blasphemy that "man is god in the making," and he dismissed Christianity as no more than a "slave morality."

In place of the classical Good and Christian love, Nietzsche offered the "will to power." He wrote, "A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength—life itself is will to power; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent results."<sup>148</sup> In the Nietzschean view, Strauss observed, "Man derives enjoyment from overpowering others as well as himself. Whereas Rousseau's natural man is compassionate, Nietzsche's natural man is cruel," and the result is that the "harmony and peace" of the classical biblical view are replaced by "terror and anguish."<sup>149</sup> Nietzsche prefers Dionysus to Apollo; that is, he prefers the egotistic and orgiastic to the humble and contemplative. In converting man, the creature, into God, the creator, Nietzsche commits the ultimate blasphemy. The result is, Strauss wrote, "Man is conquering nature and there are no assignable limits to the conquest."<sup>150</sup> As God, Nietzschean man knows no authority higher than himself. He repudiates all authority and guidance provided by traditional theology, philosophy, and history. Released from the restraining forces of classical reason and biblical love, with a frenzied craze Nietzschean man grasps for the levers of power and deliberately directs that power to the destruction of man—to the obliteration of self. Strauss concluded, Nietzsche "thus has grasped a more world-denying way of thinking than that of any previous pessimist," and the result is the "adoration of the Nothing."<sup>151</sup>

## VII

IN BREAKING with the Great Tradition of the classical and biblical legacies, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and kindred spirits spawned the modern "isms." Foremost among these are positivism and historicism. "These are the two most powerful schools in the West today," Strauss observed.<sup>152</sup> Strauss underscored the positivist dimension in Machiavelli's thinking: "He may be said to exclude dogmatically all evidence which is not ultimately derived from phenomena that are at all times open to everyone's inspection in broad daylight."<sup>153</sup> Precisely stated, "Positivism is the view according to which only scientific knowledge, as defined by modern natural science, is genuine knowledge."<sup>154</sup> Positivism looked only to the factual and the material; it refused to think in terms of the transcendent and the spiritual—in sum, the essences of the Great Tradition were beyond its comprehension.

"Positivism," Strauss explained, "necessarily transforms itself into historicism."<sup>155</sup> From the viewpoint of the historicist, "History . . . became the highest authority . . . [N]o objective norms remained."<sup>156</sup> Strauss elaborated, "The typical historicism of the twentieth century demands that each generation reinterpret the past on the basis of its own experience and with a view to its own future. It is no longer contemplative, but activistic . . ."<sup>157</sup> To the historicist, values "change from epoch to epoch; hence it is impossible to answer the question of right and wrong or of the best social order in a universally valid manner."<sup>158</sup> Historicism led its followers to the pursuit of temporal honor and glory as successful "sons-of-the-times." In substance, the modern historicists were ancient sophists in new garb. Machiavelli was a historicist in his pursuit of "Power," "realism," and "new modes and orders"; similarly, Hobbes and Rousseau in their respective pursuits of "sovereign power" and the "General Will" were historicist in orientation; and Nietzsche's individual "will to power" was, Strauss main-

tained, no more than an extreme form of "radical historicism." Although varying in technique, in all cases these thinkers had repudiated notions of the transcendent and enduring; they sought solace and understanding in the mortal clay of specific times and places; and in so doing they broke with the Great Tradition and laid the foundations of modern historicism.

Historicism fragmented into corollary isms. The "radical historicism" of Nietzsche led to existentialism. Strauss asserted, "[I]t became clear that the root of existentialism must be sought in Nietzsche . . ."<sup>159</sup> Existentialism rejected "the assumption that being is as such intelligible," and it pitted the "will to power" of each individual against an indifferent, sometimes hostile, and always meaningless universe. It was a pathetic mismatching of power; the individual invariably lost, for in searching solely within himself for the resources to prevail, man found his stock of private resources woefully inadequate, and he inevitably succumbed to his infinitely more formidable opponent, blind fate. Under these despairing circumstances, the ineluctable end was nihilism. "Let us popularly define nihilism," Strauss wrote, "as the inability to take a stand for civilization against cannibalism."<sup>160</sup> Indeed, to those caught up in the depressing web of existentialism and nihilism, cannibalism was an acceptable alternative, for it offered escape even though through self-destruction.

Finally, the "three waves of modernity" led to the great heresy of utopianism. The classical and biblical traditions were rooted in piety, and thus though they strove powerfully to perceive the transcendent Ideal, there were no illusions that the human condition was perfectible; it was not inherent in the nature of things: from the classical perspective mortal man could never expect to completely escape the limitations of the Platonic cave, and in the biblical view only God's grace, not human effort, could fully redeem. The philosophical founders of the modern age contended otherwise; they did promise an earthly utopia. Machi-

avelli had proclaimed that Fortuna or chance could be conquered, and that man could be "master of the universe"; Hobbes assured his listeners that "not divine grace, but the right kind of human government" would allow man to escape the limits of nature; Rousseau likewise maintained that man was "infinitely perfectible" and that there were "no natural obstacles" to human progress; and Nietzsche brazenly asserted, in Strauss' words, "that man is conquering nature and there are no assignable limits to that conquest."<sup>161</sup> As Strauss assessed the impulse of modern utopianism, it was predicated on the notion of "man's conquest of nature for the sake of the relief of man's estate."<sup>162</sup> Hence "[t]he modern project . . . demands that man should become the master and owner of nature," and it holds out the promise not only of "emancipation" but of "secular redemption."<sup>163</sup> This was a powerful ideology which had come to grip the modern imagination, and it moved with confidence and relentlessness.

To Strauss, modern utopianism was little more than ancient tyranny. Its essentials were well known to classical and biblical thinkers (after all, "there is nothing new under the sun"), and it was antithetical to the Great Tradition of Western political thought. While the latter tradition stressed piety, the order of things, Truth, justice, love, service, hope, and the attunement of man to the ordained nature of things, the legacy of tyranny was founded upon pride, egalitarianism, relativism, perversion, terror, power, despair, and the rebuilding of the human condition from new foundations of strictly human design. Strauss summarized, "In limitless self-love, in frenzied arrogance, the tyrant seeks to rule not merely over men but even over gods."<sup>164</sup> Tyranny was a massive heresy; its roots were Machiavellian; and it found its fullest expression in modern totalitarianism, in National Socialism and Communism.

The armed ideology of National Socialism had been halted by World War II, and in that Strauss rejoiced. It was the relative-

ly unchecked growth of contemporary Communism, the ultimate in tyranny, that deeply troubled him. "The victory of Communism would mean," Strauss wrote, "the victory of the most extreme form of Eastern despotism."<sup>165</sup> What of those "new" political scientists who expected Communist regimes "to transform themselves gradually into good neighbors?"<sup>166</sup> They were "criminally foolish," retorted Strauss; they knew nothing of the immutable ideological character of the Marxist-Leninist mind; and because these thinkers had ceased to draw intellectual and spiritual nourishment from the Great Tradition, as "old fashioned political scientists" had done, they appeared incapable of discerning tyranny, let alone condemning it. In probably his most famous statement, Strauss lamented:

Only a great fool would call the new political science diabolic: it has no attributes peculiar to fallen angels. It is not even Machiavellian, for Machiavelli's teaching was graceful, subtle, and colorful. Nor is it Neronian. Nevertheless one may say of it that it fiddles while Rome burns. It is excused by two facts: it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns.<sup>167</sup>

### *In Conclusion*

Although Strauss saw contemporary Western society gravely threatened by the modernisms, he was not a teacher of despair. "Not anguish but awe is 'the fundamental mood,'" Strauss advised, and he added it is false to assume "that a prophet is true only if he is a prophet of doom; the true prophets are also prophets of ultimate salvation."<sup>168</sup> Even when confronted with the monstrous evils of contemporary totalitarianism, Strauss counseled, "There will always be men who will revolt against a state which is destructive of humanity or in which there is no longer a possibility of noble action and of great deeds."<sup>169</sup> This rich prophecy, perhaps symbolized in the figure of a Solzhenitsyn, gives assurance that out of the very crucible of degradation springs

hope and thereby power; thus out of evil itself emerges good. If this was the case, and Strauss contended it was, hope inhered in the nature of things. There is cause then for joy, not despair. The bottom metaphysical line in Strauss' thinking is one of affirmation, not negation.

Building successfully on the foundations of hope is not likely to be accomplished through merely offering alternative isms of a more alluring and comforting nature. John Locke, whom conventional wisdom considers the theoretical patron saint of American democracy, does not point to the needed solution, for "Locke is closer to Machiavelli than he is generally said or thought to be": "Locke enlarged self-preservation to comfortable self-preservation and thus laid the theoretical foundation for the acquisitive society."<sup>170</sup> The Lockean tradition negated notions of duty and service, of excellence and virtue, and offered instead tantalizing visions of ever-expanding rights which fostered egoism—Locke was a "political hedonist." Nor, continued Strauss, did libertarianism in general possess the theoretical strength and depth to withstand the evils of the modern isms. Rooted also in hedonism and egoism, libertarianism soon produced cloying and aimlessness, and life degenerated into "the joyless quest for joy."<sup>171</sup> Libertarianism left the "ultimate sanctity of the individual as individual unredeemed and unjustified."<sup>172</sup> Similarly, there was no redemptive power in modern statist liberalism. Its ethical foundations were appallingly thin: it challenged no one to virtue and service; rather, it openly, unrelentingly, and arrogantly pandered to hedonism by promising material surfeit through governmental planning and edict. Knowledge no longer had "the character of ascent" toward the transcendent and enduring; it existed exclusively to serve the ever escalating material demands of the unrestrained human ego. Strauss concluded, "There is undoubtedly some

kinship between the modern liberal and the ancient sophist."<sup>173</sup>

Moreover, it was unlikely that some form of traditionalism alone could restore the needed metaphysical foundations. Strauss was not hostile to traditionalism if it were properly understood as a corollary to a deeper metaphysic. As a corollary theorem, it had the value of restraining men from engaging in mindless and reckless innovation; it served as a preventive to impiety, the rankest and most ancient of heresies. However, the potential error of unassisted traditionalism was its equating "the good with the ancestral."<sup>174</sup> Strauss warned, "But not everything old everywhere is right."<sup>175</sup> "Prudence," Strauss cautioned, "cannot be seen properly without some knowledge of 'the higher world'—without genuine *theoria*."<sup>176</sup> In sum, the ultimate goal is ascent to the Truth, and unexamined traditionalism frequently serves as a deterrent to that upward thrust.

The only course open to a restoration of the essential theoretical foundations seemed clear. Contemporary man had succumbed to the petty dogmas and harsh ideologies of the modern thinkers. To restore the intellectual vitality of the Western tradition, to alleviate the crisis of modernity and to avert disaster, it was imperative to reject the modern isms and to repair to the restorative powers of the classical and biblical heritages—to the Great Tradition of Western politics. Strauss never defined his intellectual position as "conservative"; perhaps there was the risk that any newly spawned ism, no matter how nobly conceived, would degenerate into another fleeting variant of historicism. Yet American conservatives happily accepted Strauss on his terms; they drew incalculable sustenance from him; many shared his belief in the restorative powers of the Great Tradition; and finally, conservatives instinctively knew that Strauss, the teacher, was correct: to endure and to prevail it was imperative to escape the stifling clutches of historicism.

<sup>1</sup>*The College* (April, 1970), 2. <sup>2</sup>*Commentary* (August, 1974), 64. <sup>3</sup>*The Academic Reviewer* (Fall-Winter, 1974), 5. <sup>4</sup>*National Review* (December 7, 1973), 1347. <sup>5</sup>*Beyond Ideology* (1967), 149. <sup>6</sup>*National Review* (December 7, 1973), 1355. <sup>7</sup>*American Conservative Thought in the Twentieth Century* (1970), 398; *National Review* (March 12, 1960), 175. <sup>8</sup>*National Review* (March 12, 1960), 175. <sup>9</sup>*The City and Man* (1964), 3 (hereafter cited *CM*). <sup>10</sup>*Social Research* (September, 1946), 331. <sup>11</sup>*CM*, 1. <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 2, 11. <sup>13</sup>*What Is Political Philosophy?* (1959), 101 (hereafter cited *WPP*). <sup>14</sup>*Natural Right and History* (1953), 156 (hereafter cited *NR*). <sup>15</sup>*CM*, 21 (italics added). <sup>16</sup>*Xenophon's Socratic Discourse* (1970), 83. <sup>17</sup>*Social Research* (March, 1947), 129. <sup>18</sup>*On Tyranny* (1963), 108; *History of Political Philosophy* (1972), 45 (hereafter cited *HPP*). <sup>19</sup>*Jerusalem and Athens* (1967), 22 (hereafter cited *JA*). <sup>20</sup>*NR*, 146-7. <sup>21</sup>*The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (1952), 161 (hereafter cited *PPH*). <sup>22</sup>*WPP*, 85-6. <sup>23</sup>*CM*, 31. <sup>24</sup>*PPH*, 146. <sup>25</sup>*HPP*, 17. <sup>26</sup>*NR*, 193. <sup>27</sup>*WPP*, 87. <sup>28</sup>*Ibid.* <sup>29</sup>*Social Research* (December, 1947), 485. <sup>30</sup>*CM*, 113. <sup>31</sup>*WPP*, 131-2. <sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 120. <sup>33</sup>*Thoughts on Machiavelli* (1958), 243 (hereafter cited *TM*). <sup>34</sup>*CM*, 59. <sup>35</sup>*WPP*, 28. <sup>36</sup>*Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (1968), 29 (hereafter cited *LAM*). <sup>37</sup>*TM*, 298. <sup>38</sup>*Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952), 9. <sup>39</sup>*Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (1965), 163 (hereafter cited *SCR*). <sup>40</sup>*The Guide for the Perplexed* (Dover Press, 1956), 5. <sup>41</sup>*LAM*, 142. <sup>42</sup>*SCR*, 165. <sup>43</sup>*Isaac Abravanel* (1937), 96. <sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 99, 104. <sup>45</sup>*LAM*, 170. <sup>46</sup>*SCR*, 190. <sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 158. <sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 148. <sup>49</sup>*The Guide*, 6, 8 (italics added). <sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 8 (italics added). <sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 9. <sup>52</sup>*SCR*, 18. <sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 201. <sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 225. <sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 171-2. <sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 203. <sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 225. <sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 222. <sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 160, 164. <sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 172, 209. <sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 21. <sup>62</sup>*WPP*, 226; *SCR*, 170. <sup>63</sup>*NR*, 36. <sup>64</sup>*SCR*, 11. <sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 9. <sup>66</sup>*Interpretation* (Summer, 1971), 7; *The State of the Social Sciences* (1956), 420 (hereafter cited *SSS*).

<sup>67</sup>*SCR*, 8-9. <sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 9. <sup>69</sup>*TM*, 133, 32. <sup>70</sup>*LAM*, 261. <sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 261. <sup>72</sup>*TM*, 150. <sup>73</sup>*SCR*, 29. <sup>74</sup>*LAM*, 266. <sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 265-6. <sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 267. <sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 270. <sup>78</sup>*WPP*, 281. <sup>79</sup>*JA*, 3. <sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 5. <sup>81</sup>*WPP*, 111. <sup>82</sup>*Ibid.* <sup>83</sup>*JA*, 20. <sup>84</sup>*Political Philosophy: Six Essays by Leo Strauss* (1975), 86 (hereafter cited *PP*). <sup>85</sup>*JA*, 21. <sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, 27. <sup>87</sup>*Church History* (March, 1961), 101. <sup>88</sup>*WPP*, 40. <sup>89</sup>*TM*, 224. <sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 175. <sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 295. <sup>92</sup>*WPP*, 180; *NR*, 178. <sup>93</sup>*TM*, 176. <sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 194. <sup>95</sup>*HPP*, 278. <sup>96</sup>*TM*, 294. <sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 142. <sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 170. <sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*, 190. <sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 199. <sup>101</sup>*Ibid.*, 178-9. <sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 191. <sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 13. <sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*, 94. <sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 132, 136. <sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 167. <sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 207-8. <sup>108</sup>*NR*, 178. <sup>109</sup>*TM*, 296-7. <sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, 13-4. <sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, 295. <sup>112</sup>*WPP*, 289. <sup>113</sup>*The Prince*, ch. 15. <sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, ch. 18. <sup>115</sup>*TM*, 67-8. <sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, 80. <sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 209. <sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 214-5. <sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, 215. <sup>120</sup>*Ibid.*, 221. <sup>121</sup>*The Discourses*, Book Three, discourse 31. <sup>122</sup>*WPP*, 42. <sup>123</sup>*TM*, 279; *WPP*, 143. <sup>124</sup>*The Prince*, ch. 25. <sup>125</sup>*TM*, 82. <sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, 127. <sup>127</sup>*The Prince*, ch. 24. <sup>128</sup>*HPP*, 287. <sup>129</sup>*TM*, 282. <sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, 9. <sup>131</sup>*The Discourses*, Book One, discourse 27. <sup>132</sup>*TM*, 9, 107. <sup>133</sup>*PPH*, xv. <sup>134</sup>*NR*, 177. <sup>135</sup>*PPH*, 5. <sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*, 100. <sup>137</sup>*Ibid.*, 163-4. <sup>138</sup>*NR*, 170. <sup>139</sup>*PPH*, 23. <sup>140</sup>*WPP*, 185. <sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, 189-90. <sup>142</sup>*PPH*, 23. <sup>143</sup>*NR*, 194. <sup>144</sup>*WPP*, 48-9. <sup>145</sup>*PP*, 89. <sup>146</sup>*Social Research* (November, 1939), 539. <sup>147</sup>*Genealogy of Morals*, 476-7. <sup>148</sup>*Beyond Good and Evil*, in *Basic Writings*, 211. <sup>149</sup>*PP*, 97-8, 94. <sup>150</sup>*Interpretation* (Winter, 1973), 112. <sup>151</sup>*Ibid.* <sup>152</sup>*The Predicament of Modern Politics* (1964), 91 (hereafter cited *PMP*). <sup>153</sup>*TM*, 203. <sup>154</sup>*PMP*, 91. <sup>155</sup>*WPP*, 25. <sup>156</sup>*NR*, 17. <sup>157</sup>*Ibid.*, 59. <sup>158</sup>*PP*, 82. <sup>159</sup>*Relativism and the Study of Man* (1961), 151. <sup>160</sup>*SSS*, 422. <sup>161</sup>*NR*, 292, 221, 184, 271; *Interpretation* (Winter, 1973), 112. <sup>162</sup>*SCR*, 2. <sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*, 15, 17. <sup>164</sup>*PPH*, 147. <sup>165</sup>*CM*, 3. <sup>166</sup>*Essays on the Scientific Study of Politics* (1962), 317. <sup>167</sup>*Ibid.*, 327. <sup>168</sup>*WPP*, 260; *JA*, 25. <sup>169</sup>*WPP*, 130. <sup>170</sup>*WPP*, 218; *HPP*, 273. <sup>171</sup>*NR*, 251. <sup>172</sup>*Ibid.*, 294. <sup>173</sup>*LAM*, 56. <sup>174</sup>*NR*, 319. <sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, 83. <sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*, 321.

# *Not For Marx*

DAVID LEVY

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS much of my intellectual development has been motivated by the desire to combat the influence of Marxism. Marxism is a pervasive influence in the intellectual world today and nowhere more so than in the social sciences where my teaching responsibilities lie. As a philosophy it has the peculiar character of enabling its adherents to dismiss in advance any objections that may be brought against it by ignoring the content of the objections and concentrating their counterattack on the motives of the detractors and the political results of their work. Since the political results, if any, of the writings of such critics of Marxist theory as Karl Popper will be to discourage people from accepting the Marxist analysis and adhering to Marxist movements, the faithful can be spared the trouble of refuting Popper's criticism with the assurance that his opposition to Marxism (and psychoanalysis) "was determined in the last instance by the bourgeoisie's political need to deny these sciences any objective validity, since they presented a massive threat to bourgeois ideology."<sup>1</sup>

No-one, in Marxist eyes, ever rejects Marxism because by a process of independent intellectual inquiry he discovers the

falsity of its basic assumptions and a critic is always "in the last instance" (a favorite Marxist phrase) determined in his rejection by external economic or ideological forces of which he may be completely unaware. True to Althusser's view that "Philosophy is, in the last instance, the class struggle in theory," and to the belief that it is the class struggle and the eventual victory of the proletariat which will establish the only "truth" that man will ever know, the social system of communism, the closed world of Marxism defines out of existence the man or woman who could show its illusory character. In other words there is no way out of the Marxist web unless one breaks with basic assumptions of the theory of which many of its adherents may be less than half aware.

Though no convinced Marxist will believe me, my opposition to Marxist politics and my support for anti-Marxist individuals, groups and interests is determined by my intellectual rejection of Marxist philosophy and not vice-versa. Marxists believe that political action will establish the truth of the human condition sometime in the future, while I believe that that truth is always present to be discovered by the intellect. If their politics determines their

philosophy, then I claim that my philosophy influences my politics, for the truth about man and his social existence is there to be discovered and not created by a more or less bloody process of revolution. Thus while accepting the close connection between philosophy and politics, which Marxists so often employ as a stick with which to beat the backs of their opponents, I reverse its significance. For Marxism is not only a creed of lecturers and professors, and there are worse dangers in its advance than the rather grey aura that it tends to spread over any department or faculty where it becomes the orthodoxy. Marxism provides the intellectual armory for internal revolutionary organizations and external aggressive powers who differ among themselves but who all threaten the future of our society; and, while Western society is not and never can be the imagined paradise of life without external constraint, it can be and is a great deal more free than anything the Marxists have been able to construct after their revolutions and misnamed "wars of liberation". My opposition to Marxist philosophy is based on the view that it gives a largely false picture of the human condition it pretends to explain. My rejection of Marxist politics is founded in a conviction that the essence of Marx's political message is a utopian belief in the possibility of a total transformation of the nature of man and the character of human existence for which neither history, philosophy nor the social sciences give us any warrant.

Utopian hope and impatience before the complexities and limitations of man's real situation in the world, and not scientific demonstration and rational argument, explain the widespread appeal of Marxism, and the undoubted sophistication of many Marxist arguments often disguises unfounded premises whose true nature is seldom made clear but which alone give any credibility to the reasoning built upon them. These considerations have led me to the view that, in parody of Marx's own

view of religion, the criticism of Marxism is today the beginning of all criticism.

Of course such a criticism would have to be developed at greater length than is possible in an essay. It would have to investigate fully the formative influences on Marx's mind, to picture what I like to think of as Marx's metaphysical cradle, set in the shadow of Hegel and rocked by the left Hegelians who developed the revolutionary and atheist possibilities hidden in the master's system. For I am convinced that it is the Hegelian idealist inheritance which is at the root of the illusory conception of the nature of politics and history which flowered in Marxism. The criticism of Marxism would also take account of the diverse branches which sprang from this common root, including the positivistic Marxism of Kautsky and the Second International, the recently fashionable, more openly Hegelian Marxism associated with the names of Lucacs, Korsch, and the Frankfurt school, and the new wave of structuralist Marxism represented by Althusser and his school. The treatment of each of these would overflow the space I can allow myself here. Nor could a full critique of Marxism be limited to a refutation of the common philosophical premises that these apparently differing factions share; it would also have to contain a sociological element based on the impossibility of reconciling the utopian aspirations of Marxist post-revolutionary society with the necessary social conditions of human existence.

Robert Tucker quotes an amusing example of what happens when this incompatibility is uncovered by Marxists themselves. In a famous passage in his early writings Marx says:

in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the



evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.

Faced with the reality of organizing an industrial system the Soviet economist V. M. Kriukov remarks that

An unintelligent person and philistine might form his own picture of communism approximately as follows: you rise in the morning and ask yourself, where shall I go to work today—shall I be chief engineer at the factory or go and head the fishing brigade? Or shall I run down to Moscow and hold an urgent meeting of the presidium of the Academy of Science?

As Tucker points out, the view of the “unintelligent person and philistine” is precisely that of Marx himself as expressed in the quoted passage. While no-one would claim that Kriukov and the Soviet theoretical journal *Kommunist* that printed his text have any special claims on the one “true” Marxist message, it is likely that the governors and apologists of the Soviet system have rather more idea of the imperatives of running a social system than the myriad generous hearted idealists who really believe that the more extravagant positions of Karl Marx, which are those which usually attract the converts, represent a realistic social or political option.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond the sociological elements of the critique there would also have to be sections on the psychological and economic illusions tied up in the Marxist package and, naturally, a specifically political side to the argument. For I do not suppose that I should ever have become committed to the struggle against Marxism if I had not come to think that totalitarian dictatorship was the necessary consequence of the active pursuit of the Marxist utopia. I have often been struck by the fact that the only non-Marxist regime in a developed country that has matched the brutality of Marxist revolutionaries in this century has been the only other regime that has envisaged its mission

in terms of an all inclusive transformation of reality. Nazis share at least this with Marxists, that both seek to force the reality of the human world into a mould it was never meant to fit. I can quite see that the classless kingdom of freedom promised by Marxism is in a different and abstractly superior ethical class to the racially pure empire of the Aryan race pursued by the Nazis, but in these matters an ounce of realism about what is and what is not appropriate on the human scale is worth a ton of superior intentions and pious hopes. However highly one estimates the ethical value of the goal of Marxist politics in comparison with that of the Nazis it remains true that much of the brutality and most of the totalitarian dynamic of both systems in action is bound up with the nightmarish pursuit in reality of an impossible dream.

The development of the above points would alone require treatment at book length and this is not the moment to attempt it. Instead I shall adopt a different approach and use elements of my intellectual autobiography to show the way my anti-Marxism has been built up over the years through the synthesis of influences from many different sources. When I came down from Oxford I was the possessor of a mediocre degree in history and the flimsiest possible understanding of Marxism. Most of my friends at Oxford, insofar as they were politically minded at all, were Tories. Like them my attitude to Marxism was one of political hostility unenlightened by much real intellectual understanding. In the course of the Spring and Summer terms of 1968 Oxford had its own pale reflection of the student riots of Paris and the continental universities. The Oxford leftists were organized as the “Oxford Revolutionary Socialist Students” and the parades, chanting, and banner waving of that particular long defunct coalition of malcontents and visionaries (among whom there were few who knew much more about Marxism than I did) offended and amused us in about equal proportions. In retrospect I think that I probably took the Ox-

ford disorders much more seriously than they deserved but, at the same time, my disquiet, expressed in the founding of a blue-bannered group which I called the Social Defense Union, had a small but solid basis in my limited knowledge of the ideas of Marx himself.

Marx was one of the main figures studied in the political philosophy course which formed a small part of the history degree: but my first serious consideration of his theory arose not from the formal teaching but out of long conversations which lasted far into the night with a friend of mine in Trinity College who was at that time a member of the Communist Party. To those conversations, as much as anything, I owe the fact that the political animal I had always been became a philosophical one as well. I can never adequately express my gratitude.

At that stage I knew that Marx had explained the course of human history in terms of the growth and organization of human productive power and that he saw the changing forms of political and social institutions as corresponding to the stage of development reached by the forces of economic production. History proceeded in stages and each social/political system, which embodied in its institutions the social relationships required by the pattern of economic ownership, was in time shattered by the revolution of the class whose rise had been favored by previous economic trends but whose ambitions were limited by the old social and political system. Feudalism had given way to capitalism and capitalism would give way to socialism. The dictatorship of the proletariat would overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie, private ownership would be abolished, the forces of production would be socialized and the kingdom of freedom ushered in.

I took it for granted that Marx was a determinist and was very impressed by the fact that many of his prophecies had not been fulfilled. But I was also puzzled by his apparent assumption that the abolition of private ownership would lead to a drastic

qualitative change in the nature of social life and that a freer egalitarian society would be the result. Even then I saw more conflict than natural harmony between freedom and equality but, more important I now realize that my puzzlement was only the surface manifestation of a basic difference between the Marxist conception of the relationship of human nature and social organization and my own.

I had always assumed that there was a relatively stable human nature which combined aggressive and cooperative elements and that social orders, in all their variety, reflected the character of the human animal that made them up. I alternated between an Aristotelian view of man as a naturally political animal and a more Hobbesian conception of society as a collective defense against the anti-social murderous side of human nature. I did not then see, and cannot accept now, Marx's assumption that what we call human nature is only a reflection of the social arrangements made by men themselves and that the reason why men will achieve a near utopian existence under communism is that the socio/economic arrangements will be such as to prevent the rise of new patterns of dominance. Marx expresses this principle in the 6th of his *Theses on Feurbach*, which states that "Human nature is no abstraction inherent in each separate individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of social arrangements," and it is noteworthy that it is precisely this point that Althusser regards as the locus of the "epistemological break" between Marxian science and the merely ideological theories of Marx's predecessors. Althusser has a case here though I see its significance in an altogether different light. The principle of the 6th *Theses on Feurbach*, the principle that makes of human nature a product of more or less manipulated social arrangements and rejects explicitly any prior inherent limiting human nature actualized in man's social existence, is alone what makes it possible for the utopian speculation on the communist future of man to mask itself as science. While I do not deny

that different social arrangements can encourage the manifestation of different human characteristics, those characteristics are precisely elements of man himself, none of which is ever exhausted and all of which are coeternal with human existence. All the evidence we have confirms the view that human nature is fundamentally unchanging and that in consequence social and political systems will always be more or less satisfactory variations on themes as old as man himself.

It was my interest in pursuing the theme of the unchanging character of human nature and society through the apparent chaos of historical events that led me into the study of sociology. A year or so after coming down from Oxford I read Robert Nisbet's *The Sociological Tradition* and was extremely impressed by the way in which such nineteenth century social thinkers as Le Play, Comte, Durkheim, Toennies and Weber had pointed out the negative characteristics of the breakup of the old regime in Europe. Some of these men, Comte for instance, thought of the problems of modernity as essentially problems of a more or less brief transitional "critical" period between the stability of the old and the coming stability of the new regime, but others, like Weber, rejected any such a historicist way out of the dilemma. "Not a summer's bloom lies ahead of us, but rather a polar night of icy darkness and hardness, no matter which group may externally triumph now," Weber told his Munich listeners shortly after the German revolution of 1918, and while I have never been able to accept a pessimistic historical determinism any more than its optimistic other face I was open to the evidence of overwhelmingly likely trends in areas of reality where no hard and fast historical "laws" are to be found.<sup>3</sup>

The difference between historical trends and so-called natural laws of history is that the first are open to diversion and even reversal when they have been understood while the latter can only be borne with the patience of resignation. It was adherence

to the first rather than the second conception of historical movement that made me receptive to the conception of politics found in the work of Charles Maurras. Maurras figures in most English and American books, if at all, as a proto-fascist, a writer of considerable talents who diverted his undoubted skills into the murky waters of reactionary and anti-semitic journalism. But while Maurras undoubtedly said many unjust things and fell into considerable political errors there is at the center of his work an insistence on the value of human intelligence in politics and an understanding of man's need to measure himself and his projects against a preexisting reality which reveal a perceptive realist of the first order. By his verbal excesses and the sheer quantity of his journalistic output Maurras makes it difficult for the newcomer to penetrate to the heart of his thinking. I was naturally curious about a man now so vilified but who had exercised such an enormous influence in his country and abroad and what I read in consequence certainly sharpened my understanding of the issues at stake in seemingly abstract political discussions. If my conversations in Trinity made me intellectually curious, then it was my readings of Charles Maurras that gave me my central belief, which I have carried through a positivist phase to my present philosophical position, in the objectivity of reality and its openness to intellectual penetration.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously it was the anti-utopian character of much nineteenth century social theory, in contrast to the boundless hopes of the ideologues of the French Revolution, that struck me. My attitude to social change was not wholly negative but I did realize that a gain in one area will have to be paid for in another. I was convinced by Comte's arguments for the inevitability of hierarchy in society even though I found his excited anticipation of a dictatorship of social scientists macabre and absurd. Total solutions, in political and social matters, are always wrong.

I suppose that it was at this time that I

also read for the first time Jacob Talmon's *Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* which argues that there was a necessary connection between the regime of the Terror in revolutionary France and the utopian ambitions and ideologies of the men who made the revolution. The parallel between France and Russia, Jacobin and Bolshevik dictatorship, still seems very revealing. The abolition of marks of rank, so apparently harmless in itself, is a case in point. Beneath the ubiquitous terms "Citizen" or "Comrade" is created, in subterfuge, a web of power relationships in which one individual has life and death power over his formal equal to an extent scarcely imaginable in a system where distinctions of rank are openly recognized. Citizen Robespierre and Comrade Lenin held, and employed, a power of which Louis XIV might have dreamed, and what is true at the top of the power ladder is true right the way down the rungs to the last little agent of revolutionary dictatorship checking his neighbors for insufficient enthusiasm.<sup>5</sup>

I was sufficiently interested in the sociology and political philosophy I was now reading to give up reading for the Bar and register to do a master's degree in sociology at the London School of Economics. The L.S.E. had a reputation for radicalism in the country as a whole. That reputation was based on the disorders of the two previous years which had been more serious there than in most other English colleges but still was nothing compared with the activities of our continental neighbors. In fact I knew from friends of mine studying there that the L.S.E.'s reputation as a hotbed of Marxist activity was grossly overblown; I must admit, though, that in comparison with what I had known before the Marxist flavor of the place was strong. A small minority of Marxist staff and a larger minority of students combined with the place occupied by Marx's writings in the social science courses to bring me face to face with the need to work out my own position more fully.

During my year of study there I learned

a great deal more about Marxism. I was impressed by the coherence of what I heard but in no way convinced. I attended Ralph Miliband's lectures on Marx and remember him announcing in his splendid but oddly hesitating tones that, "The Marxist project is only comprehensible in terms of the aim of the transcendence of domination." I also participated in Dr. Miliband's political sociology seminar. Many of my fellow students there were American new Leftists, self-styled Marxists with an insatiable capacity to absorb the unsuspectedly rich theoretical fare they complained of missing in their first degree courses. In most cases their previous acquaintance with the master was confined to a reading of *The Communist Manifesto*. Miliband patiently unravelled their confusions, and mine as well, leaving each of us to reformulate our views in the light of his astute criticism. They became, I suppose, better Marxists, while I became more certain than before that in Marxism I was facing less a school of social science than a messianic hope dressed up in the language of academic discourse. For even while I was listening to Dr. Miliband's patient attempts to sophisticate his new Leftist admirers I was learning, from my readings of Mosca, Pareto and Durkheim, how little sense there was in thinking in terms of "the transcendence of domination." At the time Durkheim and Pareto were my masters in sociology. I described myself as a positivist and opposed the authority of "social facts" to what I saw as the wildly speculative arguments of the Marxists.

Durkheim gave me a conception of society as a unity of interdependent groups. Of course there is such a thing as class conflict and, under certain conditions, it may lead to such extreme hostility within a society that the political institutions may be shattered but the roots of such revolutions are seldom to be found, as Marxists claim, in patterns of ownership. They are much more likely to derive from the failure of particular classes to carry out their specific functions in the general business of society. As for the prospect of a classless society, it all

depends on how you choose to define class. If you decide that a society without private ownership is *ipso facto* a classless society then it is quite possible to achieve it, though at considerable cost. But nothing in what you have created will prevent the reestablishment of chains of command and authority structures, and these of themselves are likely to give rise to most of the phenomena that Marxists associate with class society. It is entirely unrealistic to expect a group occupying a privileged position in the power structure of a society not to derive a certain material or cultural advantage from it. And, as Max Weber argues, there are organizational imperatives that assert themselves in any complex society. Industry has its own imperatives and whether it is privately owned or managed by a state appointed, or approved, board of directors, which is the social reality behind the concept of "socialization," will not make much difference to those employed within it: though like Weber I have a strong suspicion that private ownership is more efficient and more responsible than state control in industry and nothing in the sorry history of socialized industry has dispelled that suspicion.<sup>6</sup>

At this time I also read Robert Michels' *Political Parties* which combined with the influence of Mosca and Pareto to convince me that the so-called "iron law of oligarchy" was one of the few sociological "laws" that positivist social science has been able to formulate. "He who says organization says oligarchy" is, I think, a proposition that has yet to be refuted and if, since Karl Popper, no one feels secure enough to claim that any such proposition can be verified, it is no less irresponsible to base one's social and political action on the rejection of an unrefuted hypothesis that happens to have the whole weight of historical evidence on its side. Marxist talk of the dictatorship of the proletariat, or Maoist theories of the action of revolutionary masses, disguise the fact that someone or group acts in the name of the proletariat (as with the Bolshevik party) or stirs up the movement

of more or less discontented masses (as with revolutionary agitators). Some societies are more vulnerable than others, and at one time rather than another, to such revolutionary outbreaks, and sociology can tell us a great deal about the conditions that make it so, but there never was, and never can be, a society without discontented elements on whose discontent the revolutionary can play. Social life is inseparable from the tensions arising in the fact that it is built on the compromise between our common and often long term good and the more immediate satisfaction of partial individual or group ends. These goods are irreducible to each other and neither ought ever to be wholly sacrificed to the other, for while the continued existence of the wider society alone gives security and the conditions of fulfillment to individuals and groups, security and fulfillment themselves presuppose the acceptance by society of the private, and sometimes inconvenient, aspirations of its component parts. The limits of social tolerance cannot be laid down once and for all but must depend on a commonsense calculation of reciprocal advantage and disadvantage between the component parts of society and mutual interest in the survival and prosperity of the whole. History, especially the mythical path of Marxist history, cannot deliver us from this condition though it can provide us with the political solution of totalitarianism, whose most powerful ideological support is the myth of existence without tension and whose political survival is assured by the suppression of the men and ideas who provide evidence to the contrary, the reign of the lie and the labor camp.

I had already seen the inadequacy of Marx's view of human nature but as I continued my sociological studies I came to supplement my original explanations of social structure in terms of the demands of human nature with the further notion of the human condition or situation. Existentialist philosophers have used the concept of "the human condition" as a substitute for that of human nature, arguing

that man has no determinate nature as such but merely finds himself in a certain situation in a more or less inexplicable universe. In contrast my view has always been that the understanding of the human condition or situation is a supplement to rather than a substitute for the understanding of man's nature. The human condition is the result of the interaction of a particular sort of being, man, with the other animate and inanimate being found in the universe, each of which also has an inherent character determining the parameters of its possibilities of transformation. I have never thought that this amounted to saying anything more than that men are men and mountains are mountains and that in dealing with either we must take account of the sort of beings they are. This trail led me, in philosophy, beyond David Hume and positivism toward Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. In the development of my relationship to Marxism it led to a new interest in the philosophical background to Marxist theory. It seemed clear that Marxists paid, at least in the order of ends, no respect to the notion of inherent limitations in either human nature or the human condition and that they habitually attributed all deficiencies and disappointments to defective but eminently changeable social arrangements. This was particularly obvious in the more open utopians among them, such as Ernst Bloch, but it is also, I think, the underlying assumption in the rest.

The book which most influenced me at this stage of my Marxist studies was Robert C. Tucker's *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*. Tucker firmly places Marx against the background of the development of German idealism from Kant to Hegel and Feurbach. He shows that the idealist theory of knowledge, according to which the human mind orders or even creates reality, is the starting point for the development of Marx's own theory of social transformation. From his earliest writings Marx believed that the world could be brought into line with what he thought desirable. This is the great importance of his original

atheism as expressed, for instance, in the preface to his doctoral dissertation<sup>7</sup> for in order that the world may be totally malleable it must be theoretically emptied of any determinate structures. We have already seen how this is done with human nature, and to accomplish the same trick with the rest of surrounding reality it is necessary to deny, explicitly or not, the existence of any fixed character to its defining elements. In other words we must substitute man for God as creator of the nature of things. Tucker quotes a passage from the young Engels which puts the matter clearly: "Hitherto the question has always stood: What is God? and German philosophy has resolved it as follows: God is man." It is precisely the God-like properties attributed to Marxian man that allows the assumption that the world can be recreated in his image.<sup>8</sup>

In *The Rebel* Albert Camus provides a vivid picture of what happens when the human impulse to rebel against a situation perceived as unjust becomes bound up with the myth of the total transformation of the universe. *Metaphysical rebellion*, which Camus argues is the hard center of the cult of revolution, involves the blurring and eventual dissolution of the distinction between what is man-made and can be changed and what is not. Camus' atheism, which is better understood as a mediterranean paganism of place and fate, is altogether different from that of Marx. It leads to the realistic conclusion that man's life is unavoidably bound to be played out against the background of a preexisting reality which defines the limits of achievement. At worst men must try to make the best of a bad job and at best the achievements of the human spirit are there for all to see. A nonreligious humanism like that of Camus can, ironically, be suffused by the religious sense of absolute dependence on transcendent reality, a sense which permits pride as well as shame before the various works of man's history. But where this sense is lost, as in the substitute creation envisaged by Marx, there is no independent

measure for man and no way of distinguishing the objectively real from the subjectively desired. I have always thought that Camus' testament is particularly important, coming as it does from an atheist and man of the Left, for Camus was a natural rebel who detested even those minor injustices inseparable from social life but who understood the terrifying climax of totalitarianism inherent in the Marxist rejection of the limits of human reality.

Camus should be required reading for students of Marxist ideas because it is to the sense of social injustice that Marxism makes its first appeal. At the moment the appeal is made we must be clear about the point from which it is sounding. Is the call to revolutionary commitment aimed at the achievement of a goal of whose possibility we have some reasonable evidence or is it a cry from the imagined peaks of utopia? For the solution to real problems can only be found in reality itself and the real problem the utopian ultimately faces is the need to hide from himself and others the impossible character of his goal. Thus what purports to be a road to freedom turns out to be a path to deception and deprivation. The utopian may blind you with false science until you fall in with his plans and he may destroy the social and political conditions which he imagines to stand in his way but his problem remains. His hopes are always betrayed, his promises ever broken. At that stage his program must turn from the destruction of particular institutions, social groups, and individuals to the suppression of reality itself. Of course reality cannot be suppressed on the level of existence, things still remain what they are, but it can be suppressed on the level of consciousness through the propagation of a total ideology that systematically distorts and falsifies the evidence of reality. Alongside this, as its only guarantee, must come the elimination of anyone who sees through the veil. This is the worm of totalitarianism which lurks in the bud of every utopia.

Marx began as a rebel. Against the established political reality he set up his own

imagined paradise of freedom. His later turn to political economy, culminating in *Das Kapital*, was never designed to do anything more than to show why the subjectively desirable was historically necessary. The utopianism of this enterprise was probably unconscious: (a background in German idealism is enough to confuse anyone interested in distinguishing the possible from the impossible) but the fact remains that Marx, beginning his years of labor on detested economic statistics in the British Museum, already knew the answers he would find to the problems he brought with him from philosophy. In the case he made against the established political and economic system he was like a corrupt detective framing a suspect by the selective accumulation of evidence. The suspect was capitalism and class society in general and, as with most real individuals under investigation, there was plenty of dirt to uncover. But to the evils really resulting from the system Marx added every other charge he could find. The trick at the heart of his science of revolution was to attribute all evil to the object of his investigation leaving socialist "man," freed of the incubus of private ownership, to develop toward his fulfillment in a Communist utopia.

The procedure was illegitimate from the start: some of the "evils" analyzed were unreal, and most could by no stretch of the imagination be laid at the door of any particular system of economic arrangements. Nevertheless the theory that emerged was compelling for several reasons. It was simple in that it found a single culprit for a mass of social, psychological and philosophical evils. It was satisfying because it assuaged man's sense of his own limitations with the promise of a perfect world to come, not after death and in a scarcely imaginable disembodied state but in the world of sensible experience itself. And it was timely, being phrased in just the sort of apparently scientific terms that could command respect in a world seeking certainty in the absence of any universally

accepted religious truth. But Marxism was, and is, profoundly wrong in its failure to take account of those circumstances that permanently preclude the achievement of its goal. It was an imagined and imaginary future, itself a variation of the old theme of heaven on earth, that set the intellectual adventure of Marxism in motion as it was later to justify the crimes of Stalin and his

henchmen. Whatever the differences between the various critics of Marxism, they share the recognition that there is nothing accidental in this historical association between the Marxist rhetoric of total liberation and the Marxist practice of total coercion. That has also been my own conclusion and it goes far toward explaining why I am and ever will be against Marx.

<sup>1</sup>Alex Callinicos, *Althusser's Marxism*, 1976, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>Robert C. Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx*, 1969, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup>Weber's two magnificent postwar lectures "Politics as a Vocation" and "Science as a Vocation" have been translated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, 1970.

<sup>4</sup>A good one volume selection of Maurras' writings is provided in *De la Politique Naturelle au Nationalisme Integral*, Paris 1972.

<sup>5</sup>The messianic character of modern revolutionary creeds including Marxism is a theme common to many critics of Marxism. To Professor Talmon's name one should add those of Eric Voegelin, Thomas Molnar and Christopher Dawson.

<sup>6</sup>In other words it is because of its superior performance in assuring prosperity that I prefer

private to public ownership. I have no dogmatic preference one way or the other, it is by its good works rather than on faith that free enterprise takes its place in a conservative program and there are cases where I can well see that a measure of socialization is necessary.

<sup>7</sup>A detailed discussion of the important part played by atheism in the development of the Marxist system is provided by George Cottier in *L'Atheisme du Jeune Marx: ses Origines Héégéliennes*, Paris 1969.

<sup>8</sup>Much of Tucker's analysis is based on psychological interpretation of the development of German philosophy after Kant. Perhaps under the influence of Santayana's *Egotism in German Philosophy* the play of philosophical ideas traced by Tucker struck me as more significant than the psychological tensions on which he lays so much emphasis.



# *The Relevance of Marx and the Irrelevance of Marxian Revivals*

SVETOZAR PEJOVICH

## I

KARL MARX was an immensely productive scholar. His writings encompassed the fields of philosophy, history, politics and economics. As a philosopher and historian, Marx was well versed in the German tradition, as an economist, he was steeped in the British classical tradition, and as a political scientist, he was influenced by the early French socialists. The sheer volume of Marx's intellectual output, the three main influences on his thinking, changes in his views of social problems, and his own trade-offs between scholarship and ideological commitments all provide a fertile ground for various interpretations of his writings. Indeed, literary shelves are full of essays on what Marx meant to say, what he did say, what he should have said, what he could have said, and what he was about to say.

In my judgment, it is largely irrelevant to spend time classifying writings on the subject of Marxism as being correct or incorrect interpretations of the basic traits of Marx's thoughts. Such classifications of Marxian literature tend only to reveal our own preference for the younger Marx vs. the older Marx as well as our ability (and willingness) to separate Marx the scholar from Marx the ideologist. While it might be intellectually challenging to engage in a debate on what Marx really meant to say, the only relevant question, the one by which we judge other economists, is

whether Marx made a contribution to the stock of knowledge about the nature of economic processes. I think he did. An important contribution of Marx to our understanding of economic processes has been incorporated into some recent developments in economics. I will return to this contribution of Marx in section four of this paper.

## II

THE MARXIAN revival in the United States has taken two quite different forms. Radical economists have revived Marx's criticism of capitalism, while some eminent economists have undertaken the task of translating Marxian theory into the language of neoclassical economics. Neither of these two approaches to the study of Marxism has succeeded in pushing out further the frontiers of knowledge.

An emerging school of radical political economists emphasizes philosophical and sociological concepts of the young Marx.<sup>1</sup> It adheres to a neo-Marxist claim that all of the real and imagined evils of contemporary America can be traced to the fundamental structure of capitalist institutions.<sup>2</sup> Radical writers generally condemn private property as a vehicle by which the ruling class secures gains at the expense of the mass of exploited workers.

The radicals, while feeling much superior to their fellow men, insist that they are true representatives of the people. The appeal of Marxism to this group derives

from its religious content, the system of ends, the implicit promise of salvation and absolute standards by which to judge historical events, human actions and social institutions. Their acceptance of Marxism as a religion explains the radicals' attitudes toward nonbelievers. Nonbelievers are not merely in error but in sin. And that makes their position morally repugnant.<sup>3</sup> The radical writer does not seek the truth—he knows it. He argues against the facts of history, is indifferent to the logic of economics and ignores empirical evidence. The radical meets arguments with abuse. Any controversy with a nonbeliever can be settled only in his favor.

Radical criticism extends to all social institutions in the United States. Yet, emphasis is on the concept of "alienated labor" and the resulting dehumanization of man in capitalist America. The very structure of the system and specifically the right of ownership is alleged to force the majority of people to lead unfulfilling lives, to acquire goods they neither need nor really want, and to perform unchallenging, repetitive and frequently repulsive work.<sup>4</sup> Thus, radical critics find the source of alienation in greed, money worship, capitalist division of labor, exploitation of workers, income inequalities, militarism, and racial discrimination.<sup>5</sup> The concept of alienated labor implies to them the dehumanization of man and is, in that sense, a psychological and sociological concept. Indeed, the Marxism of contemporary radicals is the psychology and sociology of the younger Marx rather than the economics of the older Marx. This departure of American radicals from Marx the economist implies the backing away from Marx's historical determinism, that is, the backing away from his emphasis on the objective laws of history.

What are the tenets of this new Marxism in the United States? First, the intellectual class rather than the labor movement is considered to be the most "progressive" force in contemporary capitalism. The alienated intellectuals, spearheaded by radicals, are to reform the society in the

name of the people. Second, the radicals consider minorities in the United States, the younger generation and the colored races of Asia and Africa as the "proletariat."<sup>6</sup> Finally, the radicals are impatient. They do not want to wait for the economic decline of capitalism. Implicit in the radicals' behavior is their fear of the stability and affluence of the capitalist economy and its potential ability to "bribe" the masses with an abundance of material goods.

The radicals' revival of Marxism has just about as much in common with Marx as most Christian churches have with Jesus. While Marx believed that he discovered the logic of the dialectic process of history, arguments advanced by the radical writers are emotional in tone and poor in logic. Marx never shed tears about the beauty of socialism. He never thought of himself as a prophet. Socialism was not an obsession with Marx.<sup>7</sup> To him, the prime mover of history is the way in which individuals produce goods and satisfy their material needs. Thus, the process of history is subject to definite and discoverable laws. Most importantly, Marx never failed to recognize the historical necessity of capitalism as well as its achievements. In *The Communist Manifesto* he wrote:

The bourgeoisie . . . has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders for surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals. . . . The bourgeoisie . . . draws all nations . . . into civilization. . . . It has created enormous cities. . . . The bourgeoisie during its rule of a scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all the preceding generations together.<sup>8</sup>

The quote gives more credit to the capitalist society than many non-Marxist economists would claim. It is strikingly different from the radicals' insistence on immorality of the system. In fact, the entire

concept of morality has no room in the Marxist theory. A Marxist philosopher wrote:

The rejection of any appeal to abstract moral principles was for many decades one of the best-known features of the work of Marx and Engels. Marxism was distinguished from utopian socialism precisely by reference to its scientific character, to its refusal to confront society with moral principles and moral appeals.<sup>9</sup>

In "German Ideology," Marx wrote: Morality, religion, metaphysics . . . have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.<sup>10</sup>

Professor Roberts stated, quite succinctly, the purpose of this current trend to "humanize" Marx:

In the world today there are two distinct movements desperately struggling to revise Marxism into humanism. Neither movement has as its purpose the scholarly interpretation of Marx. The participants in both movements have as their purpose the use of Marx as a weapon against the social, economic, and political systems in which they live. In the communist lands of Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself, "Marxian humanism" is fighting against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to throw off the economic irrationality, cultural vacuity, totalitarianism, and terror of scientific Marxism. In communist lands "Marxian humanists" are fighting to erect humane sentiment and civic law as mediators between the rulers and the people.

In the nations of Western Europe and the Americas, "Marxian humanism" is a mask for, and a repackaging of, the old attacks against traditional liberties

and human feelings which "Marxian humanists" in communist lands are fighting to restore. Left-wing radicals and ideologues in the West find in the concept of alienation a subtler and more effective weapon against contemporary Western societies than the old Marxian slogans.<sup>11</sup>

Marx's analysis of the concept of alienation, conditioned by the objective laws of history, is different from that of neo-Marxists in the United States and can be summarized as follows:

Marx's analysis of the concept of alienated labor consists of four successive steps: (1) Since it does not belong to him, the product of his labor appears to the worker as an *alien object*. (2) Consequently, the worker considers his work as "imposed, *forced labor*. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a *means* for satisfying other needs. This is the relationship of the worker to his own activity as something alien and not belonging to him." (3) "Conscious life activity distinguishes man from the life activity of animals. . . . Alienated labor reverses the relationship, in that man because he is a self-conscious being makes his life actively, his *being*, only a *means* for his existence. . . . Thus alienated labor turns the species life of man . . . into an *alien* being and into a *means* for his *individual* existence. It alienates . . . his human life." (4) "A direct consequence of the alienation of man from the product of his labor, from his life activity and from his species life is that *man is alienated* from other men." From these considerations about the alienated labor stems the final conclusion concerning the nature of private property: "Private property is . . . the product . . . of alienated labor, of the external relations of the worker to nature and to himself."<sup>12</sup>

By contrast, radical writers assert that alienation arises because of the capitalist

need to maintain effective control over the system.

. . . Capitalist development, through bureaucratic order and hierarchical authority in production, limits work activities to those that (a) permit an essential role for capitalists and their managerial representatives; (b) facilitate supervision and discipline of workers; (c) allow for flexible control from the top; and (d) limit through the division of tasks, the initiative of workers to "safe" levels.<sup>13</sup>

And according to radical writers, to eliminate or lessen the problem of alienation, some sort of labor participation in the management of business firms must arise.

. . . I would argue that in this historical period only an expansion of the degree of democratic and participatory control that individuals have over their lives is compatible with full personal development, rewarding social activity, the elimination of class, racial, and sexual antagonisms, and material equality. The contribution of political democracy to this end is vitiated by the totalitarian organization of production. Only democracy and participation in production—*i.e.*, the replacement of the capitalist class by the working class (white collar and blue, black and white, male and female) as the architects of production, and the accountability of managers and technicians to the will of workers—is compatible with equality and full individual development.<sup>14</sup>

### III

IN ANOTHER direction, some prominent American economists have become interested in the economics of the older Marx.<sup>15</sup> Their efforts have been directed towards the objective of the translation of Marx's economics into a more familiar language of modern economic theory. The primary concern seems to be with the transforma-

tion problem between the concept of value on the one hand, and competitive prices and rates of profits on the other.

These works are certainly useful. They make Marx easier to read and understand. They also identify limitations of Marxian economics. These works show that the labor theory of value works only under highly restrictive assumptions, that either the rate of profit or the real wage must rise over time in consequence of net capital accumulation (this finding overthrows at least one of Marx's principles: the falling rate of profit and increasing misery of the working class), that profit-price determination in volume III does not require volume I's analysis of surplus-value (the value approximation to prices is a poor one), that the value of labor power can deviate from the wage rate the same as the prices of other goods deviate from their values.

Good as these works are, their contribution lies in exposition—a more familiar way of explaining Marx's analysis. They make no contribution to our knowledge or understanding of economic processes. In fact, these works seem to support Samuelson's statement that Marx the economist has been overrated. However, the translation of Marxian analysis of economic processes into the framework of modern economic theory, which is admittedly quite skillful and well done, is also quite mechanical. Like most translations of great literary works by Dostoevski and Tolstoy which have failed to capture Russian "soul," the translation of Marx's analysis has left out Marx's basic insights and perceptions of the factors that govern economic change.

In my judgment, Marxian analysis of the laws of economic change and his contribution to our understanding of economic processes is best understood within the framework of his own analytical apparatus. The labor theory of value might be dead and buried, the theory of exploitation might be taken seriously only by ideologists who need something to shout about, the falling rate of profit and the principle of increas-

ing misery of the working class might fly away in the light of empirical evidence. Marx's contributions, if any, lie not in the correctness of these concepts but in his perception of the forces which are at work in an economic system, the forces which work to move the system from one set of relationships to another, from one equilibrium to another. While his analysis of economic processes, thanks to his deterministic view of history is wrong, Marx's perception of the forces that are responsible for economic change contains an important contribution that is, without reference to Marx, contained in recent works of Alchian, Demsetz, and others.

Marx was a very learned man who missed very few contributions to the discipline. Notwithstanding many neo-Marxists and neoclassical claims to the contrary, the theory of value was the cornerstone of Marxian analysis of human history.<sup>16</sup> The purpose of his theory of value was not to explain prices but

to present the capitalist method of production in its historical connection and its inevitableness during a particular historical period, and therefore, also to present its inevitable downfall; and . . . to lay bare its essential character. . . . This was done by the discovery of surplus-value.<sup>17</sup>

Marx's purpose was to reveal that the only relevant *social* source of wealth is labor. Thus, as Baumol said, the validity of Marxian analysis "does not rest on our ability to construct a general equilibrium model . . . that generates prices proportionate to labor inputs."<sup>18</sup> The validity of Marxian analysis rests on our ability and willingness to isolate from his works those elements that could be effectively used to describe and explain economic processes.

#### IV

THE DEVELOPMENT of the theory of property rights represents one of the most important advances in economic thinking that

has occurred in the postwar period.<sup>19</sup> The property rights analysis has shown that the content of property rights assignments affects the allocation of resources and the distribution of income in *specific* and *predictable* ways. In addition, the property rights analysis has strongly suggested that the development and specification of property rights can be deduced theoretically. That is, instead of taking property rights assignments as given from without—as a sort of human discovery that is not related to the current economic situation—the property rights approach suggests a strong mutual interconnectedness between the legal system and economic life.

The property rights analysis has then made two interrelated contributions to our understanding of the nature of economic processes. First, it has extended the applicability of the standard theory of production and exchange to a wider class of real world events. Second, the property rights analysis has suggested that property rights assignments are endogenously determined; that is, they are affected by and in turn affect the value of other variables in the system. The work on the economics of property rights has been done by a number of prominent scholars such as Coase, Demsetz, Manne, North and especially Alchian, whom I consider to be the founding father of the *new* property rights analysis.

Note my use of the word *new* in the last sentence above. There is a good reason for this term. Marx and Engels were, to the best of my knowledge, the first social scientists to develop a theory of property rights. They raised the question of how and why property rights develop and, in effect, made property relations a cornerstone of the logic of history.

Marx's and Engel's analysis of the relationship between property rights structures and social change was performed with a primitive analytical apparatus and within the framework of their deterministic view of human history. Thus the analysis was inadequate and mostly wrong. However, Marx and Engels *perceived* the mutual in-

terconnectedness between the property relations and economic life, they *recognized* that property rights are endogenously determined and *sensed* that property relations affect human behavior in specific and predictable ways. In this sense, they made a contribution towards a better understanding of economic processes; a contribution that is now, along more sophisticated lines, being developed by modern theorists. The purpose of this section of the paper is to discuss the role of property rights as understood by Marx and Engels.<sup>20</sup>

In one of his major attacks on classical political economy, Marx wrote:

Political economy proceeds from the fact of private property, but it does not explain it to us. We have presupposed private property, the separation of labor, capital and land . . . competition, the concept of exchange value, etc. Political economy expresses in general, abstract formulae the material process through which private property actually passes, and these formulae it then takes for granted what it is supposed to evolve. [Private property] is explained from external circumstances. As to how far these external . . . circumstances are but the expression of a necessary course of [human] development, political economy teaches us nothing.

In this quote Marx criticized classical economists for their treatment of private property rights in resources. A generalization of the standard theory of production and exchange *via* the property rights approach has been instigated by a similar objection. While the standard theory has suggested testable implications for a number of real world events and, most significantly, explained the efficiency characteristics of competitive markets, the scope of its validity has been constrained by the assumption that one specific set of property rights (non-attenuated private property) governs the use of *all* resources.

An important, perhaps the most important objective of Marx was to discover

and reveal the historical necessity of social change. To him, the entire history of mankind was purposeful, predetermined and explainable in terms of economics. Marx viewed history as a continuous struggle of man against nature. Triggered by man's survival instinct, (*i.e.*, man's desire for utility), the purpose of this struggle, or what is the same thing, the purpose of human history, is to reverse the original relationship between man and nature in the process of production of material goods. In its long journey to the mastery over nature, each society must pass through some definite types of property relations. Every set of property relations has its place in human progress toward ultimate affluence, and "new, higher relations of production . . . or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—the property relations . . . never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society."<sup>22</sup> The term relations of production was habitually used by Marx to mean property rights. Property rights are defined as the behavioral relations among men that arise from the existence of things and pertain to their use. This definition of property rights captures the essence of property relations as understood by both Marx and modern property rights theorists.

The historical sequence begins with the primitive society. There, man is totally dependent for his subsistence on an alien and hostile environment. The entire life in a primitive society is geared toward the restricted objective of subsistence; that is, toward the appropriation of products in their natural state. The primitive community merely reproduces itself through time, and the spontaneous and seemingly unalterable division of labor explains its unchanging quality. The primitive society is a stagnant society, with no property, no state, and thus no social and economic institutions to regulate the relations among men in the process of production and exchange.

Man's survival instinct is arrested by no

inoperative in a primitive society. And it is precisely this desire for more that eventually led man to seek the ways to produce subsistence more efficiently. For example, the discovery of fire made fish edible, while the bow and arrow increased returns from hunting. As man learned how to use intermediate goods to increase the supply of subsistence by human activity, two related developments had to occur. First, each time man used a new tool, the effect was, according to Marx, a reduction in man's dependence on nature for subsistence. That is, an improvement in the process of production of material goods means a step toward the subordination of nature to man. Second, as man learned how to produce and use intermediate goods, it became necessary to define the relations among men with respect to the production and use of those tools. It is significant to note that Marx deduced the historical necessity of property rights theoretically from two factors: the initial alienation of man from nature and his survival instincts. Once man learned to apply human work to the production of tools, it clearly became essential to regulate the relations among men with respect to the production and use of those products: the institution of property rights was inevitable. Engels wrote:

To the barbarian of the lower stage . . . human labor-power still does not produce any considerable surplus over its maintenance costs. . . . The [captives of war] were killed or adopted into the tribe. . . . That was no longer the case after the introduction of cattle-breeding, metal working, weaving and lastly agriculture . . . prisoners of war were turned into slaves . . . and the first great division of labor arose.<sup>23</sup>

The development and specification of property rights can then be theoretically deduced. And the outcome of the attempt to discover the logic of history became known as the economic interpretation of history. A word of caution is in order. Marx did not say that the entire social

structure, morals, ethics, and beliefs were reducible to economic conditions of life. His purpose was to explain the economic conditions that were largely responsible for their existence.

For example, Engels related the origin of the family to changes in the content of property rights in land from communal to private ownership. He refused to accept the argument that the origin of marriage is to be found in love and passion. After all, he wrote, the "poets of love" romanticized adultery, and not marriage. Engels said:

. . . within this structure of society based on kinship groups the productivity of labor increasingly develops, and with it private property and exchange, differences of wealth, the possibility of utilizing the labor power of others . . . the old society founded on kinship groups is broken up; in its place appears a new society, with its control centered in the state, the subordinate units of which are no longer kinship associations . . . a system in which the system of family is completely dominated by the system of property.<sup>24</sup>

Engels also explored in great detail the relationship between the prevailing property rights structures in the community and family life:

In the countries where an obligatory share of the paternal inheritance is secured to the children by law and they cannot therefore be disinherited—in Germany, in the countries with French law and elsewhere—the children are obligated to obtain their parents' consent to their marriage. In the countries with English law, where paternal consent to a marriage is not legally required, the parents on their side have full freedom in the testamentary disposal of their property and can disinherit their children at their pleasure.<sup>25</sup>

The factor that determines the content of property rights and governs its change Marx called the productive forces. Marx

defined the concept of productive forces as the relationship between man and nature in the production of the necessities of life. In the concept of productive forces he included technology, stock of capital, labor force, education and working habits. In this environment, the authority (princedom, modern state, etc.) emerges as a *means* of preserving the existing property relations. Marx and Engels were quite positive in their belief that the purpose of the authority is to protect the prevailing property rights structures.

Given the prevailing property relations in the community, the productive forces develop. Each time a new development in the productive forces occurs, man becomes a little less dependent on nature, and nature, in turn, becomes a little more subordinated to man. However, at some point the existing relation of production becomes a fetter to further economic development. Then and only then, the old social structure breaks down and the new one, with a qualitatively new set of property relations emerges from within the old. This new set of property rights is then conducive for further development of the productive forces but only up to a point and the history continuously repeats itself until the final stage of affluence is reached. Thus, man pursues his objective of achieving a complete mastery over nature through historically predetermined changes in the content of property rights which, in turn, are made necessary and, in fact, endogenously determined by changes in technology and the quantity and quality of inputs. A most significant statement by Marx reads as follows:

At a certain stage of their development the material forces of production in society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or, what is but a legal expression for the same thing, with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then comes the period

of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed.<sup>26</sup>

In my judgment, Marx and Engels viewed economics as the study of property rights over scarce resources. According to them, man's compulsive desire for more (*i.e.*, to subordinate nature to himself) on the one hand, and technology, relative factor endowments and the quality of inputs on the other combine to explain the historical necessity for the development of property rights as well as changes in the content of property relations.

Marx's point of departure, objectives, and the method of analysis are substantially different from the recent attempts by scholars like Alchian and Demsetz to incorporate the various types of property rights over scarce resources into the standard theory of production and exchange. Marx explained the development of property rights as occurring in a series of historically predetermined discontinuous sequences. If we make the allowance for both the state of economic discipline some hundred years ago as well as ideological underpinnings of Marx's works that imposed on him a set of objectives that he had to arrive at, the fundamental difference between Marx's analysis and that of modern theorists lies in Marx's deterministic view of the history of mankind. He clearly considered the sequence of events to be independent of the free action of man. While it is true that Marx repeatedly said that men make their own history, he also limited the ability of man to exercise his creative potentials. He subordinated his consciousness to class consciousness and then subordinated the latter to the stage of development of the productive forces.

The fact is that Marx had a theory of property rights. He was not the first to perceive the behavioral effects of different property rights structures. However, he was the first scholar to try to develop a theory of the creation and development of proper-



ty rights; to show that property rights develop from within the system. While his analysis of the process of social change was naive, deterministic and wrong, Marx recognized the importance of property rela-

\*This article is based on a paper presented at the 1976 Interlaken Seminar on Analysis and Ideology, sponsored by the Center for Research in Governmental Policy and Business, the University of Rochester.

<sup>1</sup>For a survey of this literature see M. Bronfenbrenner, "Radical Economics in America: A 1970 Survey," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 8, September 1970, pp. 746-66.

<sup>2</sup>See R. C. Edwards, M. Reich and T. B. Weisskopf, *The Capitalist System: A Radical Analysis of American Society* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1972); and T. Parsons, "Commentary on Herbert Gintis, A Radical Analysis of Welfare Economics and Individual Development," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 89, May 1975, pp. 280-290.

<sup>3</sup>To quote G. Niemeyer, "basic orientation is toward the defective, the absurd, the sin in life, which makes it easy to draw forth an endless string of indictments and condemnations, with a resulting wonderful sense of self-justification." "What will Poor Robin Do Then?" *National Review*, 27, June 20, 1975, p. 670.

<sup>4</sup>E. Furubotn, "Worker Alienation and the Structure of the Firm," in S. Pejovich (ed.), *Governmental Controls and the Free Market* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup>M. Bronfenbrenner, *op. cit.*, pp. 748-50.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>J. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1947), pp. 5-8.

<sup>8</sup>Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Chicago: Regnery, 1954), pp. 19-22.

<sup>9</sup>E. Kamenka, *Marxism and Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1969), pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup>K. Marx, "German Ideology" in E. Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Co., 1966), p. 198.

<sup>11</sup>C. Roberts, *Marx's Theory of Exchange, Alienation and Crisis* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1973), p. 88.

<sup>12</sup>See S. Pejovich, *The Market-Planned Economy of Yugoslavia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), p. 131. All quotes are from Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," in E. Fromm, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-109.

tions, realized that they affect and are, in turn, affected by the process of production of material goods, and pointed the direction in which the analysis of economic processes is beginning to turn today.\*

<sup>13</sup>H. Gintis, "A Radical Analysis of Welfare Economics and Individual Development," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 86, November 1972, p. 591.

<sup>14</sup>H. Gintis, "Welfare Economics and Individual Development: A Reply to Talcott Parsons," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 89, May 1975, pp. 301-2.

<sup>15</sup>See P. Samuelson, "The Economics of Marx: An Ecumenical Reply," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 10, March 1972, pp. 51-7; *Ibid.*, "Marxian Economics as Economics," *American Economic Review*, 57, May 1967, pp. 616-23; *Ibid.*, "Understanding the Marxian Notion of Exploitation," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 9, June 1971, pp. 399-431; M. Bronfenbrenner, "Samuelson, Marx and Their Latest Critics," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 11, March 1973, pp. 58-63; W. Baumol, "The Transformation of Values: What Marx Really Meant," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 12, March 1974, pp. 51-61.

<sup>16</sup>See J. Schumpeter, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup>F. Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1946), pp. 94-5.

<sup>18</sup>W. Baumol, "Introduction au Capital de Karl Marx" (book review), *Journal of Economic Literature*, 14, March 1976, p. 86.

<sup>19</sup>See E. Furubotn and S. Pejovich, *The Economics of Property Rights* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Co.), 1974.

<sup>20</sup>This discussion was first developed in my paper "Towards an Economic Theory of the Creation and Specification of Property Rights," *Review of Social Economy*, 30, September 1972, pp. 309-325.

<sup>21</sup>K. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960), pp. 68-9.

<sup>22</sup>K. Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" in L. Feuer (ed.) *Marx and Engels, Basic Writings* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup>F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1942), p. 48.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>26</sup>K. Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," *op. cit.*, p. 43.

# *A Better Guide than Reason: The Politics of John Dickinson*

M. E. BRADFORD

## I

OF ALL THE MEN significantly involved in the major events leading up to and following from the American Revolution none has been so undeservedly neglected by our political historians as the mysterious John Dickinson. The oversight would seem on its face unlikely. For this planter and prototypal Philadelphia lawyer is as complicated and intellectually interesting as any American politician of his era. Furthermore, the bulk and variety of his political writings (alas, never fully collected) is unmatched by any of his contemporaries. And, contrary to the inference which we might also draw from the silence of the scholars, his voice was always heard. Which is precisely why he has been systematically ignored. What we should recognize is that the very fact of Dickinson's influential career undermines cherished theories of our national origins. If he is more useful in telling us what his times signified than are some of the Fathers we have been taught to reverence as the true progenitors—more useful than Paine, or Madison, or even most of Jefferson (the “advanced,” private opinions)—then the

authority of many components of what we now recognize as the American political religion or *telos* and the manner of thinking which has generated these ends is called into question. *And he is!*

For John Dickinson was one of the best educated, most respected and most eloquent of the public men who brought us, with character and argument, to and beyond the choice for independence. In two states (Delaware and Pennsylvania) his influence was dominant—so great that he was for a few months, in 1782, governor of both at the same time. He was honored in all the colonies. And he is almost without rival in sustaining this influence throughout the new nation's formative years, from the Stamp Act Congress (1765) to the Constitutional Convention (1787). The record of his performance in practical politics alone would require a study of two volumes. From such a book we could learn a great deal about the care and management of republics. However, it is with Dickinson as acknowledged spokesman and apologist, as political thinker, that we are here concerned. For from that Dickinson we can correct our misapprehensions of the bias of our institutional beginnings. And thus

stand ready to recover the patrimony of which we have been so carefully deprived.

Our focus here must fall particularly upon Dickinson's most famous and influential composition, the memorable *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*.<sup>1</sup> For it was through this work that he shaped the spirit of the Revolution and put his mark upon it long before Paine or Jefferson or the other "radical Whigs" could say a word on the subject: before they could get a chance to give to the American position another (and very different) intellectual base and impetus. Because John Dickinson did not wish to sign the Declaration of Independence when his associates called for the vote, it is easy to forget that this reluctant rebel had said or written *prior to 1776* more to propel his countrymen to the brink of that decision than any other representative of the exasperated colonies who signed the document with ease. And particularly in his twelve performances as what toasting patriots, from Charleston to Falmouth, called with affection "the Farmer." Had indeed done so much that he could not help but know, long before that fateful July day, that a severance was bound to come.<sup>2</sup>

Yet still he felt obliged to deny the principle of revolution, even as he maintained the right. As he had done in the *Farmer's Letters*. As he had done since his first appearance in public office, as a member of the Delaware assembly in 1760. For, like no other American political thinker, John Dickinson had absorbed into his very bones the precedent of 1688. In abbreviated form, that creed might be abstracted as follows: The English political identity (the Constitution in its largest sense, including certain established procedures, institutions, chartered rights and habits of thought) is a product of a given history, lived by a specific people in a particular place. Executive, judicial, and legislative arms of government are bound by that prescription and must deal with new circumstances in keeping with its letter and its spirit. The same

configuration *qua* Constitution should be available to all Englishmen, according to their worth and place, their deserts. And any man, upon his achievement of a particular condition (freeholder, elector, magistrate, etc.) should find that his rights there are what anyone else similarly situated might expect. Finally all Englishmen are secure against arbitrary rule under this umbrella and have an equal right to insist upon its maintenance. To so insist, even to the point of removing an offending component by force, is *loyalty* to the sovereign power.<sup>3</sup> To submit to "dreadful novelty" or "dangerous innovation," even if its source is a prince or minister who came rightfully to his position, is treason.<sup>4</sup> For the authority belongs to the total system, not to persons who operate it at a given time. Or rather, to such persons as "stand to their post" and attempt with and through it nothing contrary to the purpose for which it has been developed. It was this historic and legal identity, formed over the course of centuries by so much trial and error and with such cost in turmoil, which was deemed to be worth whatever efforts its preservation might require—even the danger of being called a rebel—because it was the best known to man.<sup>5</sup> And therefore the most "natural" and conformable to reason. To correct any declension from such experienced perfection was thus clearly more than patriotic. Like the Glorious Revolution itself, it could be called an assertion of universal truth.

Dickinson, of course, recognized that the adoption of the 1689 Bill of Rights marked an addition to and evolution from the more compact, prescriptive England which demanded the "abdication" of James II: was some sort of change, even if made in the direction of officially recovering "Anglo-Saxon purity."<sup>6</sup> That any such specification of liberties entailed a potential shift in the relation of people, King, and Parliament could not have escaped his notice. An attempt to shift the balance between the elements of a total political mixture, once initiated by one of its compo-

nents, precludes a precise restoration of things as they were—blocks that path, even if the attempt to force alteration is forestalled! Furthermore, steps must be taken to prevent a repetition of offence to the whole. As in the Great Charter itself, limits of authority must be written down, and these writings given status through institutions. Hence, even before the American counterrevolution within the larger English prescription came down to fighting, before the folly of Lords North and George Germaine led their master, with the “Proclamation for Suppressing Rebellion and Sedition” (August, 1775), to “dethrone” himself in North America, Dickinson moved to preserve the order of things he had known and loved since boyhood.<sup>7</sup> Acted first to secure inter-colonial cooperation in the Stamp Act Congress. Acted then, when the conflict grew, to replace all or part of what had been the executive power of Crown and mother Parliament, first with a Continental Congress (he was among its earliest and strongest supporters) and then with Articles of Confederation (for which he composed the original draft). The only alternatives to these gestures toward preservation and ordered liberty were something like commonwealth status for the troubled colonies or the internal anarchy of no general government whatsoever—thirteen separate rebellions, each conducted almost unto itself, but in conjunction with local, almost discrete, civil wars.<sup>8</sup> Yet all that he made before, during, and after hostilities (when he served in the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia and as the presiding officer at the Annapolis gathering which called for that more ambitious assembly) rested upon what already had being—extant societies, with an accepted culture, law, economy, and government. And he framed these substitutions from necessity alone, *because* familiar arrangements and channels for negotiation had been forever destroyed. In other words, framed them to protect, not “found,” as changes made in discovery but not in creation.

Indeed, discontinuity and raw innovation, “dangerous innovation,” was Dickinson’s antagonist at every turn, throughout his career.<sup>9</sup> And his name for that novelty was almost always “submission.”<sup>10</sup> Even when, in his first political struggle, he opposed replacement of the proprietary charter and the legal structure of unquestioned liberties established for Pennsylvania by William Penn, his concern was to preserve the protection of law and to avoid rule by fiat. The slender Quaker was, we must remember, a rigid constitutionalist, trained in the Middle Temple. Obedience to King or Parliament, so long as they operated according to law, or, in Selden’s words, “the custom of England, which is part of the law of the land” was “due submission” to the Constitution. And this obligation Dickinson acknowledged at every opportunity. Yet the basis of his argument was consistent. Always he saw his position, prior to the official secession of the colonies, as parallel to that of the common lawyers who opposed excessive Stuart claims of prerogative.<sup>11</sup> Or, to narrow the comparison even further, colonial Whigs of Dickinson’s breed came to find themselves standing in the shoes of Falkland and Hyde. The choice of rebellion or submission seemed to them a false dilemma. Both violated the Constitution. But, of the two, the latter course was, in the 1770’s, clearly more dangerous for Americans—if neither party would agree to anything less than all that they asked.

Dickinson called revolution a “poison.” But even as early as 1774 he could add to that definition that the poison of revolution, though terrible, might be an “antidote” to a poison even worse.<sup>12</sup> Faced with the language of vengeance and not sense, of violence and not of reason, with mere survival in doubt, so would any true man say.<sup>13</sup> And certainly a true Englishman, one proud to declare that “every drop of blood in my heart is British.”<sup>14</sup> Once reduced to the “alternative of chusing an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers, or resistance by force,” Dickinson did not draw back from the decision he

had hoped to avoid. And once the Howe expedition had produced in North America a more general "sentiment for independency," he would, later in 1776, probably have proposed a Declaration of his own to mark the division England had made. As I argued above, he had recognized this possibility from the beginning of acrimonious exchange. In 1765 he had written that ". . . we can never be made an independent people, except it be by Great Britain."<sup>15</sup> And he added, at about the same time, that attempts to enforce British views of the taxing power by military means would amount to "a Declaration of War against the Colonies."<sup>16</sup>

*Made* is, to be sure, the operative term. If forced into existence on the basis of strict legal arguments, the new nation could hope to keep intact the established order of American life. And if less than independence could, by some chance, serve the same ends, then all the better. What was, however, most important to Dickinson was that difficulties and differences be settled on certain grounds, according to a certain logic or theory of government, either with or without a rupture with England; that the future life of his countrymen follow a set of assumptions neither absolutist nor merely democratic; and that no American's person or property should be secured by so little as "the precarious tenure . . . of will."<sup>17</sup> Even long after the fact of independence, when, as an old man, Dickinson gathered a collection of his political writings, he cited in preface, once again, the authority of Lord Chatham and the British Constitution.<sup>18</sup> We came free, in his view, under no other auspices, no larger structure of abstraction with authority above and beyond the social bond. Rebellion *per se* is not a healthy *method* for reinvigorating society or securing human liberty. Only revolution that is not revolutionary, that is a "child of necessity," can be called American.<sup>19</sup> With these distinctions in mind we can grasp the teaching of his political essays. And particularly of the *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*.

## II

THE *Farmer's Letters* first appeared in colonial newspapers—in all but four of them—during late 1767 and early 1768.<sup>20</sup> After serial publication, the set was gathered as a pamphlet in Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Williamsburg. Later editions issued in London, Dublin, and Paris became a staple of European political conversation. American replies and comments were legion. For colonials Dickinson's work had only one rival among pre-revolutionary documents—Paine's *Common Sense*. And that late work served very different purposes, under very different conditions. I so insist because John Dickinson's performance reached *thoughtful*, literate Americans when the position they as a group were likely to assume, if the quarrel over British authority continued, was very much in doubt. And by settling that question in 1767, insofar as political argument can be said to settle anything, he accomplished a task far more difficult than getting colonials in general, in 1776, to hate George III and to blame him for the disruption of their lives. Here again the scholarship is at fault. Thomas Paine "shot fish in a barrel." He roused the passions and hates. He gave to Anglo-American amity the last little push required to remove it as an impediment to independence. And he engaged as a primary audience an element of the colonial population not, prior to 1775-1776, very much interested in the dispute over law. However, had the legal case not been well established, set in the full context of British history, and long before Paine wrote, he would have thundered out his anger to no purpose at all. For the people who assumed the position Dickinson drew up in reaction to the Townshend Acts (and to the Stamp and Declaratory Acts which preceded them) were the Americans needed to make a revolution work: and to make it (given British stubbornness) inevitable. They, by accepting Dickinson's learned, calm, and deliberate exposition of a case *at law* and *from history*, were, it

turns out, committed to such a revolution, whether they knew it or not. And, because they were, thanks to the deferential quality of colonial politics, the Americans who determined the policy followed by their particular communities. John Dickinson made resistance respectable. With the help of English Whigs educated in the theories he applied to particular disputes with the Crown, he also made submission impossible. Paine simply made a useful noise.

The manner of Dickinson's twelve letters is well suited to their matter. In form they belong to the "high" or "sober" tradition of English political pamphleteering—as does *Common Sense* to its "rough and ready" but popular counterpart. In the one company we find Milton, Swift, Addison, and Burke—plus numerous other deliberate and magisterial considerations of important public questions issued through (or from the shelter of) some usually transparent classical persona: "Cato," for instance, suggesting not personal feeling but public spirit. Cicero's epistles were the archetypes for these performances. For almost two hundred years these pamphlets formed a pattern of serious, intelligent exchange on affairs of the day unmatched in any other free society. The other quasi-prophetic school had its roots in the Puritan revolution and the emotions antecedent to that explosion. It found its model in the Scripture. It tended toward the merely personal, the paranoid, and the pugnacious. Usually its object was to draw the adversary's blood. Some English writers had skill in both veins. But not serious, "old-school" Whigs: not men (ordinarily lawyers) who believed in the prescription of British history and the importance of circumstance in interpreting what a precedent means when a prudent choice must be made. For the deepest teaching of that history was that persuasion, even if incomplete, leaves the social bond intact. Calumny, claims of divine sanction, and rigid arguments from definition (asking, for instance, "What is man?" or "What is a republic?") have a contrary effect. John Dickinson could fore-

see who might listen to a discussion of the sort he had in mind. And he also knew how important their opinions might turn out to be.

Dickinson's mask as "farmer" thus predicts what kind of discourse he intends before we have begun to read. Also the date assigned to his opening letter: November 5, when "Good King Billy" first landed in England. Like most Whig traditionalists, the Pennsylvania farmer nods toward the example of Republican Rome. In that segment of ancient history the notion of "public virtue" received its original definition and the idea of corporate liberty, liberty under law, was given meaning.<sup>21</sup> A farming gentry had governed that state, a proud class, conscious of its nation's history, devoted to preserving its laws and customs. And the same kind of men, the "country party," called William III to the throne of England. Furthermore, the voice of the farming gentry is what we hear in most Roman literature. And also in much eighteenth century English writing. Dickinson's self-representation is somewhat more modest than what we get from his English counterparts. And also more the lawyer. This pillar of the Philadelphia bar and Delaware planter was, in fact, a major figure in the unofficial colonial aristocracy. Yet persons not formally aristocratic though possessed of legal training were, from earliest settlement, the accepted leaders of colonial society. And the best respected of the lot were planters well read in law but with a passion for public service, a sense of the communal good: unassuming legal scholars not defined by size of practice or collection of fees. Hence Dickinson's opening lines:

I am a *Farmer*, settled, after a variety of fortunes, near the banks of the river *Delaware*, in the province of *Pennsylvania*. I received a liberal education, and have been engaged in the busy scenes of life; but am now convinced, that a man may be as happy without bustle, as with it. My farm is small; my

servants are few, and good; I have a little money at interest; I wish for no more; my employment in my own affairs is easy; and with a contented grateful mind, undisturbed by worldly hopes or fears, relating to myself, I am completing the number of days allotted to me by divine goodness.

Being generally master of my time, I spend a good deal of it in a library, which I think the most valuable part of my small estate; and being acquainted with two or three gentlemen of abilities and learning, who honor me with their friendship, I have acquired, I believe, a greater knowledge in history, and the laws and constitution of my country, than is generally attained by men of my class, many of them not being so fortunate as I have been in the opportunities of getting information.

The library holdings of colonial leaders speak out plainly: a familiarity with constitutional theory, and therefore knowledge of the history where inherited constitutional rights were developed and are defined, went with public virtue. Men with such discipline were a security to the liberties of those confederated with them. In them the digested experience of a united people survived. And therefore their hope of a future.

We may thus conclude, with little doubt, that the strategy behind Dickinson's rhetoric is to appear deliberate, to project repose, patience, and gentlemanly firmness and to treat his English antagonists as if their persistence to the contrary were a surprising lapse from their ordinary good sense.<sup>22</sup> Resting upon this air of mastery, he then builds, from specific (immediate) and theoretical (long term) objections to the Townshend Acts, the Mutiny and Restraining Acts to frame (out of English and Roman history, in particular) an appeal to the honor and patriotic spirit of his fellow Americans. And all of this said disarmingly, as if no rhetoric at all were involved. Only up to a point will he specify where this recommended determination might

lead. Balanced against protestations of loyalty is a small warning of its limits. But the disinterested farmer leaves no room at the end of the spectrum. What Americans cannot do is made very plain. They cannot agree to a revenue tax!

But why such excitement over so inconsequential a matter as duties upon paper, glass, lead, and tea? The crown revenue to be generated by these customs was small indeed. The Stamp Act had been repealed. Parliament agreed that it had been a mistake. And the Declaratory Act, reserving the right to tax, was merely a device for saving face, passed (we should remember) by the strongest Parliamentary supporters of colonial liberty. To see the question as did Dickinson and his countrymen, we must recognize that the danger of a secret conspiracy to consolidate political and economic power, and thus to subjugate all Englishmen, both at home and abroad, seemed altogether possible.<sup>23</sup> Wrote Dickinson, ". . . the passion of despotism raging like a plague . . . has spread with unusual malignity through Europe [and] . . . has at length reached Great Britain."<sup>24</sup> That the progress of a tyrannical design should move from the colonies, inward, to attack the Constitution within Great Britain with resources drawn from over the seas was a common speculation. Moreover, no colonial theorist of importance (and I include here many Tories, such as Dickinson's old enemy, Joseph Galloway) doubted that colony and homeland were separate legal entities—made by the charters two branches from one stem.<sup>25</sup> Even the wicked ministers of the King conceded this—though to a very different purpose. Hence the vigorously drawn distinction between revenue and administrative tax. Regulation of trade was clearly imperial business. Like the foreign policy of English dominions in general. But every page of Whig history spoke to the question of taxes levied but not voted and enforced by standing armies.<sup>26</sup> When these two innovations appeared in company, during a specific reign, the negotiated balance of government and subject was in

peril and conflict just over the hill. Large garrisons, royally appointed judges, and taxes to produce revenue (as opposed to supplies for the small colonial establishment) had not been a part of the King's presence in North America. The colonial assemblies had "granted" to their sovereign what his duties required. That the English parliament, acting under an evil "influence," now relieved them of this responsibility seemed a dangerous precedent—a precedent of the kind against which Lord Coke warned in his *Institutes*—under whose aegis the social family of reciprocal rights and responsibilities might collapse into something arbitrary and oriental; a precedent fatal to liberty, in that word's older English sense. Which is the bottom line in what Dickinson's dignified "farmer" has to say.

From an understanding of these concerns we can move toward a reading of the *Farmer's Letters* as a sequence or design: three papers on the suspension of the New York legislature, the Townshend Duties, the necessity of remonstrance, and the non-intercourse agreements. They serve as an overture to the nine papers that follow. The last two of these function as a peroration for the set: an appeal for unity and a salute to the value of liberty, all of it spun out with some elaboration and elevation of tone. The total pattern turns on letters three and ten. The first of these has to do with the tactics and spirit of a proper resistance: the tactics and spirit which will get the job done. Here he speaks to moderate men of how painless and reasonable his form of resistance (unofficial embargo) will turn out to be. Letter ten is of an opposite, almost inflammatory disposition: concerning the utmost limits of "misery and infamy."<sup>27</sup> Here Dickinson aims to frighten with an image of plunder under cover of law and the prospect of immigrant officeholders, consuming, without let or hindrance, the substance of colonial prosperity.

He imagines a history for these developments in the following terms:

Certain it is, that though they had before their eyes *so many illustrious examples* in their mother country, of the *constant* success attending *firmness* and *perseverance*, in opposition to dangerous encroachments on liberty, yet they quietly gave up a point of the *LAST IMPORTANCE*. From thence the decline of their freedom began, and its decay was extremely rapid; for *as money* was always raised upon them by the parliament, their *assemblies* grew immediately *useless*, and in a short time *contemptible*: And in less than one hundred years, the people sunk down into that *tameness* and *supineness* of spirit, by which they still continue to be distinguished. (Letter X)

The letters standing between these two all concern taxes and the probable consequences of altered tax policy. They deal with liberty, inherited rights, and the comprehension of these imperatives within the antipodes of letters three and ten. With that comprehension achieved, the "farmer" is ready to admonish. He has moved his reader from a measured resentment of British policies and their immediate results to a deeper fear of what could be their final costs: from attention or interest, to initial judgment, to consideration in detail, alarm and final full engagement—calling on both head and heart to act. The structure of the entire *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* is therefore proof of a considerable craft at work. And part of the meaning which that craft has produced.

### III

WITH THE evidence examined to this point we may hope to reconstruct John Dickinson's conception of the role of government and its relation to a healthy society. For Dickinson's political writings, though occasional in origin, reflect settled opinions on these topics: opinions in evidence at every point in his long public life. And this teach-



ing at this level deserves careful, un-anachronistic exposition. Indeed, what he says about "natural" and "political" rights alters drastically our perspective on what eighteenth century Americans meant when they invoked such terms. And therefore our view of the corporate identity which is ours by lawful entail.

To begin, government and society were not, in the eyes of our subject, synonymous terms. To encourage men to perform the virtue of which they are capable, and thus pursue their happiness, as persons and as a community, is the final end of government.<sup>28</sup> Yet its means to such an end are not social policies or teleological commitments to the achievement of some abstractly conceived state or condition or national dream of grandeur. Enlightened self-interest is only one consideration in this process. The need for fellow feeling and interdependence, for a corporate sense achieved through free choice, counts for just as much. (Remember the constant emphasis on unity of action in the *Farmer's Letters*.<sup>29</sup>) In the opinion of Dickinson, government is *law*—law which allows society to grow and flourish. Its terms and specific properties derive from an anterior social reality, not the other way around. It is a set of "ground rules" or agreed upon procedures, found in the course of their history to be reasonable and conducive to the general happiness of those whom it binds into nationality. And even the meaning of liberty (clearly, Dickinson's "god term") is restricted by these rules.<sup>30</sup>

Dickinson, like many other colonials and English "Old Whigs," speaks at times of "rights essential to human happiness" that are not "gifts" of princes but "are created in us by the decrees of Providence which establish the laws of our nature."<sup>31</sup> But between these and the "historic rights of Englishmen" he marks no distinctions.<sup>32</sup> And about the latter he speaks incessantly.<sup>33</sup> The reasons behind this conflation are not far to seek. The paradox is in our minds, not in the thinking of our subject: in the deductive, rationalist habits we have bor-

rowed from the *philosophes*, not in the prudential calculus of the Whigs. Like others with his education, Dickinson does not think of natural rights apart from their incarnation *in* historic rights, as logically prior to the social matrix where they took root. That incarnation, they recognized, might be imperfect—even, as I said above, where human liberty was concerned. But to destroy the continuum where historic rights can survive by reaching for an *a priori* definition is to risk a sad declension from what *real* ancestors under *real* difficulties have achieved: to risk, as Dickinson expressed it with one forceful analogy, making oneself into an illegitimate son.<sup>34</sup>

Men are made social, to exercise their abilities *in* society and *under* the conditions of government which, given the flaws in their nature, come closest to making that exercise possible. Those rights which produce a balance of liberty and order, the highest in human felicity, are most natural. When government acts against that balance, there is difficulty. So history reveals, telling us by negations for what condition we were made. And when government misconceives of its function, behaving as if men existed for its sake and not the other way around, the error is absolute. The natural or "inherent" right of self-preservation figures in this conception. Positive law, when it renders a whole people absolutely subject and thus destroys society, can expect to engender a rebellion. Yet, apart from such mistakes, the specific rights which prevent statist denial of man's providential destiny are not "parchment guarantees" of *Justice* or *Equality* or *Freedom from Fear*. Dickinson talks instead about trial by jury, self-taxation, petition, local responsibility for judges, and a well-ordered militia. Consider the particulars of his "A Petition to the King from the Stamp Act Congress" and all of his other statements in behalf of his countrymen made thereafter, up to and beyond the "Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress, Oct. 14, 1774."<sup>35</sup> That his "inherent rights" are thus defined, when we

recall how typical of American sentiment he was, should encourage us to ask again what occasional use of broad general terms meant in the great documents of the era of our Revolution: meant to those who assented to their promulgation. And I include here the Declaration itself!

#### IV

JOHN DICKINSON continued the same sort of non-theoretical Whig after independence had been achieved. That his objection to the timing and vehement language of the Declaration of Independence did not contradict his emphasis on concerted action he proved under arms in New Jersey and at Brandywine. And thereafter in political service in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and the Continental Congress. We needed an official instrument, linking the free commonwealths in their recalcitrance before we severed their connection in the older Constitution: and thus destroyed their roots in that deposit of liberties. Furthermore, there was a danger from "mobbish Boston" and the "licentious elements" in New England.<sup>36</sup> Alienation from the precedent in those quarters might produce a complete collapse of law into mere democracy: "the precarious tenure of will." Two American republics could result from the release of such forces; and neither would survive.<sup>37</sup> According to Dickinson's apology for his conduct in those days, he had always a horror of performing "experiments" upon the body politic.<sup>38</sup> And for the same reason he signed and then affirmed in print the Federal Constitution which he, as a delegate from Delaware, had helped to compose.<sup>39</sup> In his eyes it preserved both the "sovereignty" of the states *and* their union, allowed for no judicial review, no imperial president, no expensive establishment, and no "democratical excess." Was, in other words, no "experiment" or arbitrary construction doing violence to the larger Anglo-American identity. And when, once in office, other ostensible Federalists found in the document an authority for "energetic,"

centralist construction of the government's power, Dickinson went over to Jefferson as its true expositor. Finally, in his last days, he thundered against the French Revolution and the would-be Caesar it released upon Europe as a "reign of monsters" likely to swamp all Christendom with a terrible synthesis of "atheism and democracy."<sup>40</sup> In the Constitutional Convention his constant theme was "warm eulogiums of the British Constitution," dread of innovation, and devotion to corporate liberty.<sup>41</sup> And nowhere more forcibly than when the sanction of mathematical logic was invoked against the predominance of the House of Representatives in the initiation of money bills. His address on that occasion may properly serve as a summary of his entire political career.

In response to the cunning Mr. Madison, Dickinson declared:

Experience must be our only guide. Reason may mislead us. It was not Reason that discovered the singular and admirable mechanism of the British Constitution. It was not Reason that discovered or even could have discovered the odd and in the eye of those who are governed by reason, the absurd mode of trial by jury. Accidents probably produced these discoveries, and experience has given sanction to them. This then was our guide.<sup>42</sup>

The eminently reasonable lesson that John Dickinson offered that day is one that he followed to the end. He belonged to the party of memory; and nothing very important in the political history from which we derive was, in his public conduct, ever forgotten. Of the generation which shaped our form of government and then set it in motion, few speak to us with such corrective force. His life embodies the American political prescription. As each new wave of political geometers pours in upon us, his is an order and sophistication of experience which we shall very much require. And a teaching needed to guide us on our perilous way.

<sup>17</sup>The last convenient edition (now out of print), with a perceptive introduction by Forrest McDonald, was printed with Richard Henry Lee's "Letters from the Federal Farmer" under the general title of *Empire and Nation* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962).

<sup>18</sup>See John C. Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943), p. 477; also H. Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965), p. 118.

<sup>19</sup>Dickinson cites Lord Camden and the statute quo warranto 18th of Edward I. See *The Political Writings of John Dickinson, 1764-1774* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), edited by Paul L. Ford (originally published 1895), p. 485. From Lord Coke to Chatham ran the argument that law bound King and Parliament. See the famous Dr. Bonham's Case, 8 Coke 118a (1610). Also Herbert Butterfield, *The Englishman and His History* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1970).

<sup>20</sup>See Colbourn, p. 115 and Charles H. McIlwain's *The American Revolution: A Constitutional Interpretation* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1923), p. 23. Also *Works*, p. xvii.

<sup>21</sup>On Dickinson and the Whig legal tradition, see Charles J. Stillé, *The Life and Times of John Dickinson* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), pp. 21-34 *et seq.* This is a reprint of the 1891 biography by a representative spokesman of the Philadelphia bar, and a great adversary of New England "isms." Puzzlement that there is no modern biography of Dickinson is frequently expressed in the scholarship. See Frederick B. Tolles' "The Historians of the Middle Colonies," pp. 70-71 in *The Reinterpretation of Early American History*, ed. Ray Allen Billington (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1968).

<sup>22</sup>See Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Political Liberty* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1953), p. 398. William Henry Drayton speaks of George III as having "unkinged" himself.

<sup>23</sup>Colbourn, p. 116; also Carl Bridenbaugh's *The Spirit of '76* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 99, where he quotes the young Dickinson in England speaking of Pennsylvania as "our country" which can "bear no comparison [to] any other place."

<sup>24</sup>Like the elder Pitt, Dickinson always considered commonwealth status as the most desirable solution.

<sup>25</sup>In his "Essay on the Constitutional Power of Great Britain" (1774), he speaks of "dependence on the Crown" or "on Parliament" in analogy to "the engine of the Greeks for the destruction of Troy." Dependence is the opposite extreme of independence. Dickinson's object, at every point, was to defend ancestral walls against the breach of such innovation.

<sup>26</sup>The only peril given an almost equivalent importance was that of anarchy.

<sup>27</sup>See C. V. Wedgwood, *The King's Peace* (London: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1955). In using this analogy, Dickinson echoed the best of contemporary English Whig opinion. Dozens of attorneys trained at the Inns of Court led the Southern and Middle colonies to adopt the "Old Whig" position during our Revolution. Almost no New England lawyers had that training. Hence their political thought, under the influence of Puritan political theory, tended toward a "natural rights" position. See Stillé, pp. 26-27. Also W. H. Greenleaf, *Order, Empiricism and Politics: Two Traditions of English Political Thought, 1500-1700* (New York: Oxford, 1964).

<sup>28</sup>*Works*, p. 491.

<sup>29</sup>General Henry Conway, in a 1776 debate in Commons, is the source of this language, quoted on p. 199 of Thomas Fleming's *1776: Year of Illusion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1975). Conway is typical of the "Country Whig" in connecting "fundamental" or "natural rights" with simple self-preservation. The American reaction to the Howe expedition that he predicts (and he was correct) parallels what Lincoln got from moderate Southerners when, in 1861, he prepared to call for 75,000 troops to invade Dixie.

<sup>30</sup>*Works*, p. 267.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>32</sup>See p. 15 of *The Making of the American Republic: The Great Documents, 1774-1789* (New Rochelle, N. Y.: Arlington House, 1972), ed. by Charles C. Tansill. From "Declaration of Causes for Taking Up Arms."

<sup>33</sup>*Works*, p. 469.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xvii. G. H. Guttridge in his *English Whiggism and the American Revolution* (Berkeley: University of Calif. Press, 1963), p. 34, writes that "the Whiggism of Chatham was of that old order which placed the fundamental law of the Constitution beyond the reach of Parliament."

<sup>35</sup>See David L. Jacobson, *John Dickinson and the Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1764-1776* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), p. 109.

<sup>36</sup>Page 241 of Merrill Jensen's *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

<sup>37</sup>See my "A Teaching for Republicans: Roman History and the Nation's First Identity," *Intercollegiate Review*, XI (Winter-Spring, 1976), 67-81.

<sup>38</sup>Jacobson, p. 89. The same use of the pastoral overtones of a rhetorical mask appears in his "Song of the Farmer," the anthem of the Revolution. See Kenneth Silverman's *The Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976), p. 114.

<sup>20</sup>The best feature of Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origin of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967) is his account of this "conspiracy theory." See pp. 144-150 *et seq.*

<sup>21</sup>*Works*, p. 494.

<sup>22</sup>See p. 96 of Carl Becker's *The Declaration of Independence* (New York: Vintage Books, 1958). Becker gives Dickinson credit for announcing what Lawrence H. Gipson says had long been, in 1774-1776, true: that the "colonies, in actuality if not in theory, had become states within the Empire." See p. 223 of *The Coming of the Revolution, 1763-1775* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

<sup>23</sup>Guttridge, pp. 6-7.

<sup>24</sup>*Empire and Nation*, p. 58.

<sup>25</sup>Contrary to much early comment, Dickinson stood at a great distance from the commercial Whigs of Philadelphia. He censured them explicitly in "An Address Read at a Meeting of Merchants to Consider Non-Importation" (April 25, 1768), *Works*, pp. 409-417. He cites Locke rarely. Property is important to him as a precondition of responsibility. But the property which makes for virtue is land: "A landed interest widely diffused among the mass of the people, by the personal values of honest industry, fair dealing, and laudable frugality is the firmest foundation that can be had for the secure establishment of civil liberty and national independence." Quoted in Jacobson, p. 125.

<sup>26</sup>See especially *Empire and Liberty*, pp. 77-79 and 83-85.

<sup>27</sup>Christopher Hobhouse in his *Fox* expresses the moderate Whig view of liberty with a certain finality: "Liberty, like happiness, is most perfect when least remarked. As most misery is caused

by the pursuit of an abstract happiness, distinct from the occupations that make men happy, so most tyranny springs from the struggle for an abstract liberty, distinct from the laws and institutions that make men free." (Quoted by Sir Arthur Bryant, *The Years of Endurance, 1793-1802* [London: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1975], p. 33.)

<sup>28</sup>*Works*, p. 262.

<sup>29</sup>Jacobson is always to the contrary on this point—and always wrong. See *Works*, pp. 183-187 and 193. For further support of my view see Douglass Adair, "Experience Must Be Our Only Guide: History, Democratic Theory, and the United States Constitution," pp. 129-150 of Billington, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup>See Colbourn, pp. 107-119.

<sup>31</sup>*Works*, pp. 274-275. Obviously, if liberties come to us as does our name, then equality has nothing to do with the idea. Neither do certain arguments from a definition of *Man*.

<sup>32</sup>*Works*, pp. 193-196; also Tansill, pp. 1-9.

<sup>33</sup>See Miller, p. 365; also Gordon Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 45 and 205.

<sup>34</sup>See Jensen, p. 509. Also John H. Powell's reconstruction of "Arguments Against the Independence of these Colonies—in Congress," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 65 (Fall, 1941), 468-481.

<sup>35</sup>Stillé, p. 370.

<sup>36</sup>See his *Fabius* letter (1788)—a neglected counterpart to *The Federalist*.

<sup>37</sup>Stillé, p. 282.

<sup>38</sup>See pp. 56 and 77 of James Madison's *Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1966).

<sup>39</sup>Madison, p. 447.

# *The Significance of Solzhenitsyn for Contemporary Culture*

EDWARD E. ERICSON, JR.

REPORTEDLY, there is a story circulating these days in the Soviet Union. One hundred years from now a schoolchild is asked, "Who was Leonid Brezhnev?" After a thoughtful moment he responds, "Wasn't he some politician in the age of Solzhenitsyn?" Even if this is apocryphal, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn clearly writes with an eye toward posterity. Nevertheless, he has been not at all reluctant to slog his way into the quagmire of current issues which confront our world. Having established for himself a platform based on his literary reception, he has felt it incumbent upon himself to speak out on public issues. And here he puts me in mind of another who wrote for posterity, John Milton.

Although Solzhenitsyn sees himself as a man of letters, it is his political outlook which seems to be evincing the most interest among his critics. There is a need, just as in Milton's case, to try to distinguish between the quality of Solzhenitsyn's literary work and the validity of his social-political opinions. As one critic noted,

Solzhenitsyn takes for granted an absolutely direct and open connection be-

tween literature and morality, art and life. . . . In the West today such an assumption about the relationship between art and morality is distinctly unfashionable.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, then, the critic cannot skip blithely over Solzhenitsyn's views on life and attempt some purely aesthetic judgment. Since a brief article cannot do all things at once, this one shall forego literary explication and shall be devoted to the preliminary task of trying to locate Solzhenitsyn's place in the contemporary cultural scene. Clarifying what Solzhenitsyn really believes is a necessary prolegomenon to an intelligent reading of his fiction.

Back in 1971, when I began speaking and writing on Solzhenitsyn, I felt a need to show that this author was really a Christian and that an awareness of this was essential to a proper reading of his works. I need no longer do this. Though few critics were saying so then, today his Christian faith is universally acknowledged. It was the publication in 1972 of *August 1914* which made this unarguably apparent. About the same time he published a prose-

poem prayer, sent an open letter to Pimen, Russian Orthodoxy's Patriarch of All Russia, and publicly joined the Russian Orthodox Church.

It would be incorrect to think that the period of the early seventies dates a major conversion experience on Solzhenitsyn's part, though it does mark the time of his "going public" with his witness. He did have a conversion, and it dates from his time in the prison system. While he has not (yet, at least) given us a detailed account of this change of heart, he has shown us parts. One passage from *Gulag Archipelago I* is relevant here. He tells us that he used to defend Marxism even while in prison. But his very first year in prison convinced him that he could not dismiss these anti-Marxist arguments as bourgeois lies, "and right at that point my whole line of reasoning began to weaken, and so they could beat me in our arguments without half-trying."<sup>2</sup> He also argued against religion, but again knew he was getting the worst of these debates. Once, talking with a young man, he dismissed a prayer of the late President Franklin Roosevelt as hypocrisy. The young man asked why it was not possible that a political leader might sincerely believe in God.

And that is all that was said! But what a direction the attack had come from! To hear such words from someone born in 1923? I could have replied to him very firmly, but prison had already undermined my certainty . . . and right then it dawned upon me that I had not spoken out of conviction but because the idea had been implanted in me from the outside. And because of this I was unable to reply to him, and I merely asked him, "Do you believe in God?"

"Of course," he answered tranquilly.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in 1972, then, Solzhenitsyn's extra-literary opinions, including his religious ones, began to become clearly discernible to all. This led to a serious reevaluation of his reputation. Many Western critics seemed positively eager to express

their misgivings. Some went further and published strongly negative reactions. Opinion about Solzhenitsyn became sharply divided.

It was not so before 1972 (or, for the most part, before 1974). He had been hailed variously as Russia's greatest living writer, one of the world's greatest living writers, one of the all-time great novelists, a modern hero in the age of the anti-hero, a genius. (Malcolm Muggeridge still calls him "the greatest man now alive in the world.")<sup>4</sup> There were, of course, some cautionary notes, more often about his literary worth than about his moral stature; but these seemed little more than *pro forma* hedges, since relatively little was really known about him and critics are distinctly unaccustomed to anything resembling hero-worship.

In the last couple of years the most common terms to summarize Solzhenitsyn have been as follows: authoritarian, elitist, reactionary obscurantist, chauvinistic, nationalistic, anachronistic, anti-democratic. Quite a switch. Here are a few examples:

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn is a great writer and one of the outstanding moral personalities of our time. . . . But I have read his Washington speech with feelings mixed of fascination, amazement and shock: fascination at the nearly seamless consistency of his vision of world affairs, amazement at its utter discord with the facts of recent international history and shock at the radical moral wrongness of the position he has now taken on questions upon which the survival of mankind may depend.<sup>5</sup>

Patricia Blake, who frequently reviews Russian literature for the *New York Times*, declares:

Uneasiness among many of his admirers grew into dismay as he offered instruction, judgments and proposals intended to reverse the course of East-West relations. His appearances on public platforms and on TV presented the

spectacle of a writer genuinely persuaded that he might change the minds of politicians by the force of the Word.<sup>6</sup>

Another reaction to Solzhenitsyn has been to declare his art poor because his ideas are wrong. Thus:

. . . Solzhenitsyn now conscientiously articulates an ideology which is politically reactionary, socially and morally elitist, and in the end devoid of artistic interest.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the best way to demonstrate the before-and-after quality of this reevaluation process is to cite a critic who wrote both early and late on him. Jeri Laber is one such. In a 1968 review of *The First Circle* she declared:

It is a distinguished work, thoroughly contemporary, authentically Russian, yet so profound in its vision and its implications that it transcends both its locale and the specificities of its subject matter.<sup>8</sup>

Her title, "Indictment of Soviet Terror," is significant. It is his anti-totalitarianism with which she resonates. She also declares that "he is not a polemicist," and she sees him as "the symbol and the embodiment of an undaunted creative spirit."<sup>9</sup>

By 1974 her tune has changed greatly. Now she calls Solzhenitsyn "an authentic reactionary." She elaborates:

Reactionary, authoritarian, chauvinistic—hardly adjectives that sit comfortably with the typical image of a freedom-fighter and Nobel Prize winner.<sup>10</sup>

But she tells us that this vision of Solzhenitsyn should not have surprised us; it was obvious all along.

Those who have remarked upon it have done so with surprise. Many Western admirers of his fight against despotism had considered Solzhenitsyn an advocate of liberal values and had, until the publication of the *Open Letter* [to the Soviet

Leaders], refused to acknowledge what should have been evident from a careful reading of his fiction and his earlier political pronouncements.<sup>11</sup>

She now speaks of "the inflated praise he has received from Western reviewers, whose admiration for Solzhenitsyn's courage is often mistakenly expressed as esteem for his works. . . ."<sup>12</sup> She is undoubtedly correct here, and it fits her as well as anyone.

Now she discovers, "His work, for the most part, is didactic, as he intends it to be, and it is often dull and ponderous."<sup>13</sup> She adds:

. . . many Western readers appear to find his novels heavy-handed, humorless, and monotonous. Solzhenitsyn's characters lack dimension: his heroes are all passive, prisoners not so much of themselves as of immutable circumstances. The political and philosophical theories for which the novels serve as vehicles are oversimplified and irritatingly presented with a repetitious, self-indulgent verbosity.<sup>14</sup>

How are we to understand these negative reactions from Western critics? Laber herself gives an important clue when she refers to Solzhenitsyn's "misleadingly 'liberal' image," adding, ". . . he is not the 'liberal' we would like him to be."<sup>15</sup> Western critics, most of them liberals, early recognized his anti-totalitarianism and assumed that, if he shared this point with them, he must share others, must be "one of them." An anti-totalitarian must be a liberal. Quite a provincial view, really. And when his later writings showed that they had misread him? That he had failed the test of ideological orthodoxy? Well, time for a reevaluation.

Solzhenitsyn offers an explanation of his own which we may apply to this phenomenon. It is, as usual, uncomfortable, disturbing.

One thing is absolutely definite: not everything that enters our ears pene-

trates our consciousness. Anything too far out of tune with our attitude is lost, either in the ears themselves or somewhere beyond, but it is lost.<sup>16</sup>

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Solzhenitsyn not only helps us understand his negative critics, but he also gives us aid in discerning how we should read him. As long as a decade ago, he explained his literary purpose this way:

. . . it is not the task of the writer to defend or criticize one or another mode of distributing the social product, or to defend or criticize one or another form of government organization. The task of the writer is to select more universal and eternal questions, the secret of the human heart and conscience, the confrontation of life with death, the triumph over spiritual sorrow, the laws of the history of mankind that were born in the depths of time immemorial and that will cease to exist only when the sun ceases to shine.<sup>17</sup>

Solzhenitsyn is quite explicit about his vision of the proper relationship between politics and religion in his introductory essay in *From Under the Rubble*, entitled "As Breathing and Consciousness Return." He declares that "the state structure is of secondary significance. That this is so, Christ himself teaches us. 'Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's'—not because every Caesar deserves it, but because Caesar's concern is not with the most important thing in our lives."<sup>18</sup> It is because our modern world has inverted the proper order and allows politics to dictate to religion that Solzhenitsyn cannot avoid discussing politics. "When Caesar, having exacted what is Caesar's, demands still more insistently that we render unto him what is God's—that is a sacrifice we dare not make!"<sup>19</sup> Solzhenitsyn insists that "the absolutely essential task is not political liberation, but the liberation of our souls from participation in the lie forced upon us."<sup>20</sup>

Solzhenitsyn finds it natural, indeed inescapable, to make the political order an-

swerable to a higher order. He judges politics by applying moral values. Says he:

The transference of values is entirely natural to the religious cast of mind: human society cannot be exempted from the laws and demands which constitute the aim and meaning of individual human lives. But even without a religious foundation, this sort of transference is readily and naturally made. It is very human to apply even to the biggest social events or human organizations, including whole states and the United Nations, our spiritual values. . . . And clearly, whatever feelings predominate in the members of a given society at a given moment in time, they will serve to color the whole of that society and determine its moral character.<sup>21</sup>

Solzhenitsyn's final word to his countrymen before he was forcibly exiled was a manifesto entitled "Live Not by Lies."<sup>22</sup> In elaborating that imperative, there and elsewhere, he expands on his view of the role of politics.

When oppression is not accompanied by the lie, liberation demands political measures. But when the lie has fastened its claws in us, it is no longer a matter of politics! It is an invasion of man's moral world, and our straightening up and *refusing to lie* is also not political, but simply the retrieval of our human dignity.<sup>23</sup>

While the official Soviet view of Solzhenitsyn seldom coincides in details with those rendered by various Western liberal critics, they do share a very fundamental premise: that Solzhenitsyn is to be interpreted in primarily political categories. And why? Because (and I think I am neither unfair nor too stark) both Soviet officials and Western liberals perceive reality primarily through the prism of politics. Their politics may and do differ, but they share a deeply held conviction about the primacy of politics. Politics is, for both, the crucial arena for human thought and ac-



tion. Yet Solzhenitsyn has plainly told us all along that this is not the way to approach his works.

Let us now focus on a few of the main accusations which have been leveled against Solzhenitsyn: that he favors authoritarian government, that he is nationalistic, that he is anti-technological, and that he is anti-Western. He has been badly misunderstood on each point.

Solzhenitsyn himself warned of the "great dangers and defects in authoritarian systems of government."<sup>24</sup> Why, then, did he advocate that for the Soviet Union, as he did in his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*? He knows that there is precious little chance that they will take advice from him.<sup>25</sup> He knows that they are "realists par excellence" and "will not allow power to slip out of [their] hands."<sup>26</sup> He continues, "That is why you will not willingly tolerate a two-party or multiparty parliamentary system in our country, you will not tolerate real elections, at which people might not vote you in."<sup>27</sup> So he offers authoritarianism as the realistic alternative to the present tyranny. The Soviet leaders are already authoritarian; let them just drop the Marxist ideology, he pleads. But he goes further. Russia has had such little experience with democracy that there is not much likelihood that it would work right now. Eight months of democracy in 1917—and now more than a half-century of authoritarianism! Besides, authoritarian government is what Russia has known throughout its long centuries of existence. Only in the past there was a crucial difference: "that authoritarian order possessed a strong moral foundation, embryonic and rudimentary though it was—not the ideology of universal violence, but Christian Orthodoxy. . . ."<sup>28</sup> Therefore, in Solzhenitsyn's mind, "Everything depends upon *what sort* of authoritarian order lies in store for us in the future."<sup>29</sup>

This position strikes me as highly sensible. It is based on the foundational belief that something is more important than the

particular form of government. But it has proven odious to those believers in the religion of democracy. Note that nowhere does Solzhenitsyn assert that democracy is unattractive. But he does believe that the form of government is a means to an end, not an end in itself. We hear frequently that we should not impose democracy on emerging nations which lack a democratic tradition. For offering similar advice for Russia, Solzhenitsyn is castigated by these same Westerners.

Solzhenitsyn's nationalism has also been misunderstood. One critic—and a Jesuit priest at that—in a generally sympathetic article, declared that "Marxism remains more Christian than Solzhenitsyn's vision" insofar as it is internationalist in political outlook. In his view Solzhenitsyn's call for national repentance and regeneration is inimical to Christianity.

It is certainly true that Solzhenitsyn likes concepts like "the vitality of the national spirit."<sup>30</sup> He does say things like "a nation can no more live without sin than can an individual" and "The nation is mystically welded together in a community of guilt, and its inescapable destiny is common repentance."<sup>31</sup> He is clearly at odds with an internationalist like Norman Cousins<sup>32</sup> when he says, in his *Nobel Lecture*:

It has become fashionable in recent times to talk of the leveling of nations, and of various peoples disappearing into the melting pot of contemporary civilization. I disagree with this. . . . Nations are the wealth of humanity, its generalized personalities. The least among them has its own special colors, and harbors within itself a special aspect of God's design.<sup>33</sup>

He even cites the day of Pentecost, with its various tongues, as a rationale for the legitimacy of the concept of nationhood.<sup>34</sup> He has a deep loyalty to the venerable Russian traditions. It is the spiritual health of Russia which preoccupies him. On this subject he adds, "I myself see Christianity today as the only living spiritual force ca-

pable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia."<sup>35</sup>

But two further points of explanation are needed. One is that he is trying to discourage the Soviet leaders from continued imperialist enterprises in the affairs of other nations. He urges them to leave South America, Africa, and the Arab lands alone—and even to liberate the other nations within the U.S.S.R. which are now dominated by the Russians. He urges them to pay attention first to the beam in their own eye.

Second, he does believe that each of us as individuals should be "developing our own WORLD-WIDE VIEW."<sup>36</sup> He also speaks of "the growing spiritual unity of mankind"<sup>37</sup> and seeks to contribute to it. He sees an expanding role for world literature, as a "living, heartfelt Unity" today, in this process.<sup>38</sup> That he is no isolationist who disregards the rest of the world is patently clear from the very fact that he speaks out about world problems, not just Russian ones. He does not even stop short of offering his prophetic warnings to the United States. Indeed, at times his Western critics seem to be implying that they wish he would mind his own business (which is Russia) more than he is doing!

We see, then, that the simple label of nationalist does not do justice to Solzhenitsyn. Call him, rather, a patriot. He has offered a good definition of patriotism:

As we understand it patriotism means unqualified and unwavering love for the nation, which implies not uncritical eagerness to serve, not support for unjust claims, but frank assessment of its vices and sins, and penitence for them.<sup>39</sup>

Americans who say that sort of thing are generally viewed today as quite progressive, not as benighted chauvinists.

One of the real surprises to me has been to observe the virulence with which some have attacked Solzhenitsyn as anti-technological in outlook. It is true that he prefers small cities to megalopolises; more and

more Americans seem to be voting their feet in the same direction today. He does fear that we will use up our natural resources quickly if we continue unlimited growth. He is disgusted with our industrial pollution. He accepts the arithmetic done by the Club of Rome. In our country those who do the same are generally considered enlightened, committed to an important cause. When Solzhenitsyn does so, he is reactionary; he wants to veto the twentieth century.

And have our critics forgotten Solzhenitsyn's oft-repeated praise for engineers? Colonel Vorotyntsev, one of the two main figures in *August 1914*, is praised precisely for the efficiency of the engineer which characterizes him and, which Solzhenitsyn clearly feels, is a necessary addition to the moral virtues of old Russia which are embodied in General Samsonov.

But let the writer speak for himself. Here is a vintage passage from his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*:

The urban life, which, by now, as much as half our population is doomed to live, is utterly unnatural—and you agree entirely, every one of you, for every evening with one accord you all escape from the city to your dachas in the country. And you are all old enough to remember our old towns—towns made for people, horses, dogs—and streetcars too; towns which were humane, friendly, cozy places, where the air was always clean, which were snow-clad in winter and in spring redolent with garden smells streaming through the fences into the streets.<sup>40</sup>

Note, please: streetcars are included. The product of technology, but ecologically sound. That is what he wants. It is acting as if this finite planet were infinite that he considers such folly. So he does call for technology, but of a particular kind and scope: "An economy of *nongigantism* with small-scale though highly developed technology will not only allow for but necessitate the building of *new* towns of the *old*

type.”<sup>41</sup> These towns, incidentally, he wishes to see built in the great uninhabited Northeast of the Soviet Union, an area which looms large in his thinking about the future of his nation. He also says, “The chief aim of technology will now be to eradicate the lamentable results of previous technologies.”<sup>42</sup>

Far from being anti-technological, Solzhenitsyn gives very specific advice about the future direction which technology should take, even down to such details as substituting electrically powered cars for ones with internal combustion engines in those hoped-for new cities. Far from being some sort of romantic primitivist in regard to technology, he is unusually current on this subject. And we should remember that he is by training a mathematician and physicist.

Then, what shall we make of the charge that Solzhenitsyn is anti-Western? He certainly passes some rigorous judgments about the West. He is most severe when he is talking about liberal politicians and intellectuals, and it seems that some of them have felt that an attack on their opinions is an attack upon us all.

It is especially when he attacks some of our “sacred cows” that he draws the fire of Western critics. When he criticizes our electoral campaign practices, Daniel Ellsberg, our withdrawal from Vietnam (he calls it a defeat), and such details, our natural reaction is resentment. While he seems, given his personal history, amazingly well informed about the world, including the United States, it is certainly fair to say that he understands us less well than he understands his own country (though I would say that he understands us infinitely better than we understand Russia). One need hardly concur in all his judgments of the West and the United States to value him as a friend.

And this should be stated clearly. He is our friend. On a recent BBC show, which had a sensational impact in England and which has been replayed on American public television, he was asked about his role

as critic of the West. He responded quickly, “I am not a critic of the West. For nearly all our lives we worshiped the West. We did not admire the West; we worshiped it. Note the word—we *worshiped* it.”<sup>43</sup> Specifically on the United States, he says that it is the least guilty Western country for letting Communism take control of so much of the world.<sup>44</sup> He declares that “the United States of America has long shown itself to be the most magnanimous, the most generous country in the world.”<sup>45</sup> It is with this high praise in mind that we should read his scoldings of us. He is not opposed to us; he is just opposed to the mistakes which he believes we have made and are making. Why should such a posture be disturbing to us?

But if he denies being a critic of the West, he does admit, “I am a critic of the weakness of the West.” He goes on to recount the bewilderment of himself and other Russians when the West did not show firmness in dealing with the Soviet rulers. He thinks the key geopolitical question is how the West will withstand the “unprecedented forces of totalitarianism” now arrayed against it. He considers the present process called *détente* to be self-deception on the part of the West and declares, “. . . after Angola I can’t understand how you can utter this word.” He fears that the pace of Western capitulation is much faster than the slow process of spiritual revival and moral regeneration which is his hope for our world. He says he “wouldn’t be surprised at the sudden and imminent fall of the West.”<sup>46</sup>

Now this is all depressing and apocalyptic. It is also the stuff of the prophet. Perhaps he is too pessimistic. I think he probably is. I certainly hope so. But I am not sure. I will be even less sure if voices like his go unheeded. Certainly, no one thinks the world is in very good shape these days. If Solzhenitsyn exaggerates, let us not allow differences of degree to obscure our awareness of the reality of the dangers about which he is warning us.

Solzhenitsyn especially scores the West’s refusal to apply moral considerations to

world politics. "In 1939 England thought differently," he says in his BBC interview. "England chose the moral course" and fought the Nazis. Whereas Bertrand Russell and others have said, "Better Red than dead." England *then* did not say, "Better Brown (Nazi) than dead." His own view is, "Better to be dead than a scoundrel."<sup>47</sup>

To all of this Solzhenitsyn has given an historical context. It is the legacy of the Enlightenment which he rejects.

The catastrophic weakening of the Western world and the whole of Western civilization is by no means due solely to the success of an irresistible, persistent Soviet foreign policy. It is, rather, the result of a historical, psychological and moral crisis affecting the entire culture and world outlook which were conceived at the time of the Renaissance and attained the peak of their expression with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.<sup>48</sup>

Frankly, I think that very much of the recent negative reaction to Solzhenitsyn can be explained in strictly ideological terms. The writer is clearly not a Western secular liberal. And Western secular liberals are often not as good in practice as in theory when it comes to tolerance. Do not misunderstand. Some of the fairest and most perceptive readings of Solzhenitsyn have come from Western secular liberals. But for all too many of them his case is an interesting index of the depth of their party spirit.

Secular liberalism has been so dominant in the recent Western cultural scene that it is easy for its adherents to think that their opinions are the only possible ones for serious-thinking people to hold. When a figure of such global acclaim comes out with such unexpected ideas as Solzhenitsyn has expressed, it is quite a challenge to our cultural orthodoxy and naturally sets off a reflexive motion of defense.

Western and secular and liberal. One way to describe Solzhenitsyn's significance for contemporary culture is to see that he is a counter to all three. To the extent that he is heard, really heard, Western secular

liberalism will be in eclipse. I wonder if there are not already other signs, smaller than this one of Solzhenitsyn's presence, which point in the same direction. (To elaborate this would take another article. While the press generally pictures him as a lone voice crying in the wilderness, it is just possible that he is the herald of a new mutation in our cultural evolution. Someday, surely, Western secular liberalism will fade, its cultural hegemony lost. What *will* follow it? Something must. Solzhenitsyn expects that totalitarianism will. Maybe so. The only other competitor seems to be the movement of spiritual renewal which Solzhenitsyn himself is leading.

Western and secular and liberal—and Solzhenitsyn as a counter. Of these three, the least important, in my mind, is that he is not Western, or at least not typically so. He is happy to acknowledge that Russia is a part of the Western world, and he stands squarely in the great tradition of Western literature. But he is also emphatically Russian. The two major strands of Russian intellectual life in the nineteenth century and indeed on into the twentieth are Westernizer and Slavophile. Solzhenitsyn's natural alliance is clearly with the latter strand. What he reacts against in the Western tradition is particularly the turn it has taken in modern times.

Next up the ladder in importance is his rejection of liberalism. In politics even more than in religion, conservatism is declassé. Actually, it has been some years since liberalism has held the monolithic place which Lionel Trilling described in the opening pages of his book of 1950, *The Liberal Imagination*.<sup>49</sup> The radical upswing in the 1960's was perhaps the most prominent challenge to the liberal hegemony, but that seems to have passed. Now along comes Solzhenitsyn and opens up a new front. But, unlike our new radicals, he challenges the very basis of liberalism's world view: the primacy of politics. What, if anything, will come of this we cannot yet tell. One thing, though, is clear. If anything comes of it, it will not be an attack limited

to or even focusing on the issues of politics, narrowly conceived.

And that is because Solzhenitsyn's politics are only an example of the application to concrete realities of his underlying religious vision. And it is here, in his opposition to secularism, that we find his major importance for our culture today. After the exhaustion of so many schemes and hopes for the saving of the world, perhaps our time is ripe for a new articulation of the Christian religion. It will have to be new. It will have to grow out of a grappling with the realities of our century and have a clear application to that cultural context. Since we Americans have, in Solzhenitsyn's view but also in the view of very many foreigners, been sheltered from most of the earth-shattering currents of social reality of the twentieth century, it should not be surprising if any new and powerful intrusion of the voice of Christianity back into the world's cultural conversation comes from elsewhere than here. Does it not surprise us to learn that a large number of Soviet writers are quite consciously Christian? Undoubtedly, Christianity is a great-

er factor in Soviet literature than in modern American literature. In the Soviet cultural scene Christianity is often perceived to be the main competitor to Marxism-Leninism. Solzhenitsyn and a group of intimates, who are just a small portion of a larger host, have come out with a ringing testament entitled *From Under the Rubble*. The title is highly significant for our consideration here. Having never been under the rubble ourselves, we Americans are incapable of presenting to the world such a witness of faith. There can be no resurrection where there has been no death. Resurrection, from under the rubble—some such images as these may well be the necessary preliminaries for a persuasive reintroduction of Christianity into the mainstream of world culture. It may well be that the new champions of the Christian faith will come from the Soviet Union and other lands where the anti-human forces of the twentieth century have been felt with full force. If so, it is not difficult to predict that those most resistant to this new witness will be those who have felt this anti-human impact the least.

<sup>1</sup>Dan Jacobsen, "The Example of Solzhenitsyn," *Commentary* 47 (May 1969), 82.

<sup>2</sup>Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, I (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 602.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 611-12.

<sup>4</sup>Cited from an interview of Solzhenitsyn on BBC and replayed on "The Firing Line" over American public television outlets March 1976. Muggerridge's appearance was part of the American showing. Further references to this program will be to the BBC interview of Solzhenitsyn.

<sup>5</sup>Richard Lowenthal, "The Prophet's Wrong Message," *Society* 13 (Nov.-Dec. 1975), 40.

<sup>6</sup>Patricia Blake, Review of *The Gulag Archipelago*, II, *New York Times Book Review*, Oct. 26, 1975, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Francis Barker, "The Gulag Archipelago: History Betrayed I," *New Blackfriars* 56 (May 1975), 212-13.

<sup>8</sup>Jeri Laber, "Indictment of Soviet Terror," *New Republic* 159 (Oct. 19, 1968), 32.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

<sup>10</sup>Jeri Laber, "The Real Solzhenitsyn," *Commentary* 57 (May 1974), 35.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup>Jeri Laber, "The Selling of Solzhenitsyn," *Columbia Journalism Review* 13 (May-June 1974), 5, 7.

<sup>16</sup>Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, I, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>17</sup>Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Appendix to *Cancer Ward* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), pp. 554-55.

<sup>18</sup>Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "As Breathing and Consciousness Return," in *From Under the Rubble*, by Alexander Solzhenitsyn et al. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975), p. 24.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "Repentance and Self-Limitation in the Life of Nations," in *From Under the Rubble*, p. 106.

<sup>22</sup>*Washington Post*, Feb. 18, 1974, p. A26.

<sup>23</sup>Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "The Smatterers," in *From Under the Rubble*, p. 275.

<sup>24</sup>Solzhenitsyn, "As Breathing and Consciousness Return," *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup>Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 7.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>30</sup>Solzhenitsyn, "As Breathing and Consciousness Return," *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>31</sup>Solzhenitsyn, "Repentance and Self-Limitation," *op. cit.*, pp. 111, 113.

<sup>32</sup>See Norman Cousins, "Brief Encounter with A. Solzhenitsyn," *Saturday Review* (Aug. 23, 1975), 4.

<sup>33</sup>Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p. 19.

<sup>34</sup>Solzhenitsyn, "The Smatterers," *op. cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>35</sup>Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>36</sup>Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>Solzhenitsyn, "Repentance and Self-Limitation," *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>40</sup>Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 37-38.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>43</sup>BBC interview of Solzhenitsyn.

<sup>44</sup>Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "America: You Must Think About the World," in *Solzhenitsyn: The Voice of Freedom* (Washington, AFL-CIO, 1975), p. 121.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>46</sup>BBC interview of Solzhenitsyn.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup>Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup>Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1954), p. 5.

# *The Sorrows of Ad Hoc Socialism*

GEORGE H. DOUGLAS

ACCORDING TO our national pollsters and takers of surveys, and according to the various sages and pundits who dispense wisdom in the mass media, the American public is presently not very happy with the workings of its government, disillusioned by politicians and makers of public policy, and generally not very happy with our national style and way of life. This disillusionment does not simply seem to be the product of Watergate, or of political corruption in the narrow sense, or of America's weakening international posture, or of economic recession, or indeed of any single set of national failures. It seems to have developed slowly and steadily in recent years as a pervasive and highly generalized malaise, and manifests itself in a belief that things somehow are not quite what they ought to be.

Needless to say, this diminished faith in American government and in things American can be looked at from a number of different angles. Obviously first of all there is something of a reversal of the public senti-

ment of the last several decades that had been marked by an exaggerated respect for the powers of government and a belief that "disinterested" men of public life can provide easy cures for all the problems and sorrows of the world. On the other hand, it is very doubtful whether we are turning back to anything like the belief of the early Republic and of our founding fathers that government and political factions should be objects of suspicion kept in careful check and relegated to a position of inferior importance and stature. At the present moment it still appears that the people cling to their faith in the curative powers of government (if only the government in power be changed!), but they do harbor the nagging doubt, the suspicion, that things are not quite right, that some aggravating trend needs to be reversed, that we need to get back to some simple and pristine way of doing things.

What then, is diseased or unworkable about our present system of government? Where did we go off the track and lose

sight of the traditional American virtues and native American genius? My assumption is that we've drifted—not fallen, for “fallen” is too suggestive of suddenness and we're dealing with a tendency that has been growing steadily for forty years—into a national political style that is peculiarly ill suited to the kinds of problems that face us today, a style that may have worked at one time, at least on the surface, but is no longer sufficient to keep us clear of the rapids.

It seems to me that our current difficult situation has its roots in the great depression of the 1930's; that we shifted gears at that time and started down a road that must eventually bring us to grief, although the solutions and techniques of government that came into play at that time seemed perfectly appropriate for prevailing conditions of the day. Shall we say, then, that the depression started us on the road to some form of socialism? Yes, I think that we may fairly say that it did, although this word is anathema to most Americans and is avoided in public discussion whenever possible. But whether we choose to call our political system socialism or not, it is important to see precisely what kind of system we have adopted for ourselves. For it is of a curious kind, and in our desire to comfort ourselves that we “haven't gone wholly into socialism,” we refuse to pay much attention to the precise style of political policy we actually have. The distinguishing style is very important and bears close examination.

The great depression and the New Deal that was fabricated to deal with it gave us a very peculiar way of looking at the world and at historical events, and it locked us into a highly unique and eccentric form of politics that few Americans prefer to look in the face. How shall we describe this way of looking at the world and at historical events? How shall we describe this way of

responding to our nation and our government? My assumption is that in the depression we surrendered our belief in any kind of coherent social order, gave up the search for any kind of American ideal or national identity, and came to see only social problems and individual responses to them. We adopted what might be called a social caseworker's view of the world, the social caseworker perhaps being someone who sits at his desk and treats *seriatim* the problems that present themselves for solution this very day, that pass by in a kind of kaleidoscopic confusion, paying closest attention to those that shout the loudest for attention or seem to provoke public clamor or annoyance.

Philosophically we could best describe this attitude or habit of mind as an extreme form of nominalism or social pragmatism. There is no social order, there is no nation, there are no cherished social institutions or governing ideals; all that exists are social problems which shoot like meteors across the sky and cry out for some kind of *ad hoc* artillery to shoot them down. The business of government is, so to speak, to invent individual pieces of artillery to shoot down individual, disconnected problems—most especially those that at the present moment agitate the citizenry.

What I should like to suggest, then, first of all, is that the New Deal settled us into a very odd form of socialism—the actual term is not really crucial, and some may prefer not to call it socialism—the essence of which is not so much government planning, but government emergency action, crisis therapy—*ad hoc* problem solving. This socialism obviously lacks one feature that has traditionally been touted as one of the strongest virtues of socialism—and in the absence of which seems to make socialism irrational or even insane—namely long-term planning of governmental or social functions. (I am not, incidentally, at-



tempting to sell the virtues of any kind of governmental planning, large-scale or small, but to point out the bizarre curiosity of a kind of socialism that is lacking in the very traits and advantages that are supposed to make socialism attractive.)

Historically, of course, it is not at all unusual that the style of socialism that grew up with the New Deal developed the kind of characteristics it did. The New Deal was itself never anything like a solidly built political philosophy and was never sold to the public as such. It began as a response to the grim conditions that prevailed in the dark days of the depression. Like Topsy, it just grew. Franklin D. Roosevelt was fond of saying that he saved the country from anarchy in 1933; that he kept us from falling apart at a time of economic and spiritual crisis. But if this is true—and I would not like to dispute the point one way or the other—it was not because he had developed some new American system, some new vision of American life, but because he became ingenious at thrashing around here and there to solve this problem or that by trial and error—to find out where things were falling apart, filling up this hole or that and then moving on to other trouble spots as they developed. Roosevelt himself best stated his method during the 1932 campaign when he expressed his belief that no known economic or social methods could be applied to what had become the worst depression in American history. “It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.”

In his study of the progressive movement, *The Age of Reform*, Richard Hofstadter developed the theory that the New Deal was not really cut out of the same cloth as the earlier reform movements in America such as the Progressivism of Theodore Roosevelt, or the New Freedom of Woodrow Wilson, although those move-

ments are often taken to be antecedents of the New Deal. Those earlier movements, which admittedly could approach domestic economic problems in a more leisurely fashion, were more concerned with reshaping or restructuring American ideals, with asking fundamental questions about American democracy and lifestyle. “At the core of the New Deal . . . was not a philosophy (F.D.R. could identify himself philosophically only as a Christian and a democrat), but an attitude, suitable for practical politicians, administrators, and technicians. . . .”<sup>1</sup> Hit with great suddenness by the depression, Roosevelt found himself unable to make use of any of the traditional solutions and ideals of the kind of liberalism in which he had been reared. He believed himself to be starting out with a practical mess—but with a clean tablet ideologically speaking. And, as Hofstadter remarked,

to describe the resulting flood of legislation as economic planning would be to confuse planning with interventionism. Planning was not quite the word for the New Deal: considered as an economic movement, it was a chaos of experimentation. Genuine planners like Rexford Guy Tugwell found themselves floundering amid the cross-currents of the New Deal, and ended in disillusionment.<sup>2</sup>

Because the New Deal had to get underway so rapidly, and because its programs expanded to vast proportions in such a short period of time, it never developed anything like a coherent philosophy, and, said Hofstadter, not very much in the way of a literature of political criticism. While the Progressive era of the early twentieth century produced a number of significant books of pamphleteering or social criticism—the writings of men like Croly, Lippmann, Adams, Brooks, Brandeis, and the muckrackers come to mind—“The New

Deal produced no comparable body of political writing that would survive the day's headlines." There was no time for this; in the hectic years between 1933 and 1938 there were simply too many pressing problems to be dealt with. And what is most important

the New Deal brought with it such a rapid bureaucratic expansion and such a complex multitude of problems that it created an immense market for the skills of reform-minded Americans from law, journalism, politics and the professoriat. The men who might otherwise have been busy analyzing the meaning of events were caught up in the huge expanding bureaucracy and put to work drafting laws that would pass the courts, lobbying with refractory congressmen, or relocating sharecroppers.<sup>3</sup>

What is significant in all this, however, is that the crisis mentality, the stop-gap philosophy of the New Deal, was not a short-term American phenomenon but has pervaded our thinking and lifestyle in the years since. Not only have we failed to produce a critical literature about ourselves in the years since the depression, but American politicians seem perfectly content with *ad hoc* solutions to problems that crop up on short notice and seem to be sources of agitation here and now; indeed they capitalize on them, revel in disorder and lack of unity. What should be done to prepare for problems and contingencies of twenty years hence is thus always a bugaboo, and the politician attempts to sweep thoughts of such things under the rug insofar as it is possible to do so.

In what follows I should like to look at this national failure of nerve under roughly two headings. I would like to suggest first that our lack of national self-identity and inability to provide anything but short-term solutions puts us in a bad position to solve the kinds of social and eco-

nomic problems currently facing us. Secondly, I would like to suggest that *ad hoc* socialism is spiritually debilitating and self-perpetuating, and that it develops an agitated, unself-confident and harassed citizenry.

Let us look first, then, at the more narrowly economic side of the problem. Since the New Deal, the prevailing economic philosophy and public policy has been eclectic, although always tinged with Keynesianism and social welfarism. The economists who have most influenced our public policy do not like to refer to themselves or to our American system as "socialistic"—the word, if not the fact, is usually avoided as if it were a loathsome disease. They prefer to think of our American system as a free enterprise system with modifications or extensive governmental restraints. An economic thinker like John Kenneth Galbraith, for example, is probably typical of this mental attitude and most perfectly represents the spirit of modern New Dealism. He and others like him seem to hold that here and there the capitalist or free enterprise system works, and where it does it should be left alone; where it doesn't work (perhaps we should say where it is most easily open to attack—for Galbraith is a kind of Fabian socialist, who believes that you intrude your ideas only where they can get by without bringing the public to the point of outrage) it ought to be subject to governmental interference and regulation. In short, it is the *ad hoc* socialism of the New Deal in permanent formal dress. As long as things seem not to need interference they are left alone; when something goes wrong, government is expected to provide some remedy.

Of course there is a fatal weakness wrapped up in this kind of economic and social policy and it ought to be obvious what it is. The *ad hoc* socialist must wait until things go wrong before he acts; he

starts from only the most feeble notion of a fixed social order to which he gives his allegiance, but waits for some kind of "crisis" to develop, after which he will craft some kind of individual solution. This, in most cases, sets up a chain of events that will give rise to further crisis a short way from the road.

Consider a crisis of rather recent vintage, the so-called energy crisis. It is rather typical of the kind of crisis that breaks out in our economic system of *ad hoc* socialism. Quite naturally it came on with great suddenness, since it is characteristic of our economic order that nobody swings into action until something is actually upon us. Admittedly the energy crisis is enormously complex and tied to an intricate web of international affairs; nevertheless, those in the know—energy economists, government bureaucrats charged with responsibilities in this area—could very easily have predicted and prepared for the recent energy crisis a decade or more before it arose. But in our system of government, specialists or bureaucrats are also—and mainly—charged with the responsibility of minding their own business until a real shouting crisis is upon us; they may know a crisis is coming, but their mandate is not to do anything until it actually erupts. Always remember the motto or working philosophy—things are working well until some segment of the population shouts to complain that they aren't working, and then something must be done to fix up the trouble.

In a way this makes a mockery of the very purpose and function of a bureaucracy. One would assume that the reason for having a governmental bureaucracy is to provide awareness, continuity, forethought, planning. In specialized areas it has to be assumed that the average citizen, even the average congressman, cannot do this for himself. Actually, in the American system the bureaucrat is charged with remaining

innocuous—perhaps with feathering his own nest and propagating his own species—until such time when an actual crisis calls for him to come up with some plan. Certainly the government bureaucracy of the United States had the capability of predicting the recent energy crisis in advance—just as it could have predicted the bankruptcy of many of our railroads; that it did not do so is certainly a perfect proof of the kind of constraints under which it operates.

Of course in an unregulated economy, an economy in which the market operates more or less freely, there would also have been the capacity to predict and prepare for the energy crisis. But industries like the petroleum industry are carefully monitored and not permitted to respond to conditions of supply and demand as they would if left to their own devices. They, too, are forced into a crisis mentality, locked into perpetual unpreparedness beyond their control. Left alone, of course, the petroleum industry would have started a slow rise of prices years before it did in anticipation of the extremely high cost of drilling and prospecting necessary to gain energy self-sufficiency and to counter monopolistic practices elsewhere in the world market. And when a *bona fide* emergency finally permitted the industry to raise prices it lay exposed to the charge from congressmen and citizen groups of excess profiteering. (Of course there has to be excess profiteering—in this case though profiteering is hardly the right name—how else can the hideously expensive process of drilling and exploring be supported? The brouhaha over excess profiteering in the petroleum industry is simply an artificial crisis built on top of an unnecessary crisis. In large measure, too, it is the product of public ignorance, and the ceaseless activities of political demagogues.)

One of the principal sorrows of our sys-

tem of *ad hoc* socialism stems from public pressure that is put on ever-decreasing resources, whether natural resources or the efforts of human labor. Once again the bleak energy picture is a case in point. In recent years we have seen a number of kinds of conflicting demands on energy resources and they obviously can't be reconciled. For example, we want cheap energy, but at the same time environmentalists are making it impossible to use some of the cheaper fuel forms that are available. Coal pollutes the atmosphere the environmentalists tell us, so that the factories which burn coal must convert or shut down—no compromises. But of course there has to be compromise; it is like the case of the irresistible force meeting the immovable body. It simply isn't possible to satisfy all the demands made by each and every special advocacy group; the public will simply have to learn restraint, self-discipline and self-sacrifice. The day of cheap energy is over just as the day of cheap labor is over. And it is not going to do any good for environmentalists to scream and shout for every one of their demands because they simply cannot all be met without the country falling apart at the seams. Still, in our system of *ad hoc* socialism we have conditioned the citizens to demand, to shout for this or that; indeed, if one wanted to characterize American democracy at the present time we would say that instead of being a government by people it is government by clamor, government by special-interest group. Along the way we have lost the virtues of self-restraint and personal economy; but obviously we must restore these virtues if we are to keep from falling into anarchy.

This brings me to what I consider to be the most destructive tendency of our social order. In creating a vast, unwieldy, and bureaucratic government that promises more cures for the sorrows and inequities in the world than it can possibly deliver, we have

at the same time created a citizenry that is unfulfilled, agitated, noisy and selfish, a citizenry that has seemingly lost the understanding of what it means to live in a community and share the burdens and delights of human experience with one's fellow creatures. The rule, you see, is shout, demand, "something for me," here and now, preferably something paid out of the public till, something for me alone, and let the other fellow take the short end of the stick. In sum, our style of socialism is ultimately antithetical to the very idea of citizenship or community. It makes us a nation of screamers and shouters, not a nation of responsible individuals. Here, again, we see an obvious perversion and distortion of the stated ideals of socialism. Socialism is believed by its supporters to foster a humanitarian sense of community, to tie us into even closer relationships with our fellow man. But the evidence suggests quite the contrary. We are far less a unified and cohesive people now than we were before the rise of socialism.

To illustrate my point, let me consider a few examples of the kind of behavior I have in mind and which I believe to be characteristic of American life in this the eighth decade of the twentieth century.

Let us start with another example suggested by the energy crisis I have just been discussing. At the time of the most critical shortages of petroleum in the winter of 1973-74, in a frenzied effort to dramatize their inability to obtain fuel at reasonable prices (and occasional inability to obtain fuel at any cost), independent truck drivers blockaded major interstate highways, thereby interfering with normal flow of traffic. In a few instances arms were drawn, explosions were heard. Now of course the excuse for this behavior was that the very livelihood of truck drivers was being threatened, that a man has a right to pull out a revolver if there is no hamburger meat on his table

and other people have it. And, to be sure, it is hard not to be sympathetic with people caught in an economic squeeze not of their own making. On the other hand, it ought to be obvious that the government simply cannot redress all the economic inequities in the world; the promise that it can simply has the result of making everybody dependent on government solutions for every problem that exists. Now, yes, the truck drivers got their relief—and perhaps it was right that they should—but what I want to do is not comment on the means of redress or the rightness of it, but point out that such extremities can only have as their ultimate effect an agitated, bitter, and hostile people, ever on the look-out for political and economic slights, ever pleading for their own special cause or special interest group. “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country” were the eloquent words of the late President John F. Kennedy, but it would be hard to imagine a more misplaced and feckless eloquence anywhere in the course of American history.

Or consider the case of the recent financial crisis in New York City. In large measure the crisis was the result of public workers having obtained a stranglehold on the city’s government—garbage collectors and subway motormen enjoying salaries befitting the most highly skilled professional men and artisans. The response of such workers when the city faced bankruptcy was most instructive. Representatives of the police and fire departments of the city called on the President at the White House to impress on him the fact that if the city were not able to sustain wage levels of city employees in the style to which they had become accustomed, *anarchy* could result. (One often wonders if the people who threaten anarchy ever ask themselves what would happen if it actually came about—would they really be immune from it?)

And it was broadly hinted that these fire and police workers would not only be passive contributors to this threatened anarchy, but active participants in it—that those very men sworn to preserve domestic order and safety would not have even the slightest interest in these things if their own immediate needs and desires were not ministered to.

What a way to run a country one might think. We do little to cultivate the idea of citizenship, of civic responsibility; the only idea cultivated in the populist form of socialism is the idea that I come first and the others must take the hindmost. (I do not mean to suggest, by the way, that this phenomenon is limited to the so-called laboring interest groups—doctors will agitate almost solely for the interests of doctors, lawyers of lawyers, teachers of teachers.)

Especially must we be careful not to single out any particular pressure group. We must lay blame on a style of government that promises fruits and no corresponding responsibilities, that sets one special group in deadly hate against the other (largely in America we practice a politics of hate—business against labor, the rich against the poor, black against white, women against men—and the successful politician is largely the one who shows the most ingenuity in enflaming one segment of the population against another). The special interest groups, if left to themselves, might in time develop some kind of civility or restraint, but the point is they are not left to themselves, but whipped into a perpetual frenzy by the populist politician who prefers to encourage strife and civil disorder as a way of making sure his own talents are rewarded.

Be that as it may, the most important thing that is wrong with us in America is that we have drifted into a style of government that might best be described as government by agitation, or government by

clamor. It is a style of government that could work fairly successfully a few generations ago because our major social and economic institutions were still pretty healthy (they appeared unhealthy in the depression, but this was a kind of specious bad health; under the surface they were still operating successfully), and at first it had the virtue of calming worried citizens in troubled times. But with our major institutions in disarray and with our economic base—superabundant natural resources and an aggressive reservoir of labor power—crumbling, it may well be that ultimately we will be unable to sustain even the semblances of a populist democracy, but will have to accept some more obvious and blatant form of totalitarianism, where government finds it necessary to clamp the lid on expressions of special interest simply because they become so chaotic and vociferous that the only alternative is self-destruction. That is to say, populist democracy may not be, as many of its supporters assert, the culmination and consummation of the democratic dream of our forefathers, but its very antithesis and mortal enemy.

Indeed at this stage of our history it may be wise to think back to the ideals and the notions of our founding fathers. There can be little doubt that any of them returning at the present moment—and I am thinking not only of the skeptics of democracy like John Adams, but even the most ardent supporters of government by the people like Thomas Jefferson—would doubtless be horror-struck by the almost complete reversal and rejection of our original national ideals. Instead of government by the people written about in the Declaration of Independence, we have government by government—government which manipulates people mainly to its own ends. It was the wish of our nation's founders that a social order and civilization could be sustained by the kinds of institutions that grew organically

out of the national will. That the national will had to be realized through the agency of government never entered their minds—government was intended to be the caretaker and overseer of details. The main substance of the Declaration of Independence was a cry against the excesses of government. Against the English king, it was alleged that “he has erected a Multitude of New Offices and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out of their substance. . . .” and so, on and on. The goal was always unobtrusive government, freedom for people to develop their own nation, their own social institutions, their own national spirit, with as little interference from government and politicians as possible. The founding fathers, that is to say, offered us a national style based on liberty, not on democracy (and certainly not populist democracy); liberty does not refer, as democracy does, to government by majority rule, but freedom from all kinds of tyranny . . . whether tyranny of a king, or of a group of people.

Somehow or other we lost that ideal, and, in the twentieth century, we are having to pay the price. How precisely we lost it is not clear, and is a subject for deepest historical contemplation. Most of the framers of the Constitution weighed this possibility and agonized over it, often referring to the danger that the people would mistake liberty with “licentiousness,” that they would try to grasp the advantages of liberty without accepting the responsibility for it. In a way this is precisely what happened in our national history and it happened fairly early—probably by the time of Jackson. But the dire consequences of it were forestalled until our own century for reasons that only by now are becoming clear.

One of the most prophetic utterances on this subject was written in 1857 by Lord Macaulay, who tried to explain to an American friend why he believed that democra-

cy would come to grief in America as it had in Europe in the early part of the nineteenth century, even though for certain reasons of nature the fate would be forestalled. Macaulay wrote to Henry Stephens Randall, author of an early *Life of Thomas Jefferson*, and an ardent supporter of Jeffersonian democracy, and expressed the view that "institutions purely democratic must, sooner or later, destroy liberty, civilization, or both." This had in fact happened in France when a pure democracy was established in 1848. Because of the density of population in France (and elsewhere in Europe) this democracy fell apart almost instantaneously and liberty was crushed—although civilization saved. Macaulay wrote:

You may think that your country enjoys an exemption from these evils. I will frankly say to you that I am of a different opinion. Your fate I believe to be certain, though it is deferred by a physical cause. As long as you have a boundless extent of fertile and unoccupied land your laboring population will be far more at ease than the laboring population of the old world, and, while that is the case, the Jeffersonian politics may continue to exist without causing any fatal calamity.<sup>4</sup>

But, Macaulay continued, the time will come when America, too, will be thickly populated and will have its Birminghams. When that happens the American institutions will fairly be brought to the test. How, then, will America restrain its discontents, its political demagogues and mountebanks?

It is quite plain that your Government will never be able to restrain a distressed and discontented majority. . . . The day will come when, in the State of New York, a multitude of people, none of whom has had more than half a breakfast, or expects to have more than half a dinner, will choose a Legislature. Is

it possible to doubt what sort of Legislature will be chosen? On one side is a statesman preaching patience, respect for vested rights, strict observance of public faith. On the other is a demagogue ranting about the tyranny of capitalists and usurers, and asking why anybody should be permitted to drink Champagne and to ride in a carriage, while thousands of honest folks are in want of necessaries. Which of the two candidates is likely to be preferred by a working-man who hears his children cry for more bread? I seriously apprehend that you will, in some such season of adversity as I have described, do things which will prevent prosperity from returning; that you will act like people who should in a year of scarcity devour all the seed-corn, and thus make the next year not of scarcity, but of absolute famine. There will be, I fear, spoliation. The spoliation will increase the distress. The distress will produce fresh spoliation. There is nothing to stop you. Your Constitution is all sail and no anchor. As I said before, when a society has entered on this downward progress, either civilization or liberty must perish. Either some Caesar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand, or your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth; with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have engendered within your own country by your own institutions. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Except for the few scattered historical references that give this prophecy a dated quality, how can we escape the conclusion that Macaulay has described a very likely fate for us? Of course an apologist for contemporary populist democracy might say in rebuttal that Macaulay has erected an ideal of civilization as the flowering of a so-

cial elite. It would be argued that such elites are no longer (if they ever were) guarantees of loyalty and responsibility to state or nation, whereas a powerful central government in a democracy can act responsibly and still express the general will of a people. But the point is, whenever the will of the people is chaotic, selfish, and undisciplined, the government that must jump to its whims must also be unstable and self-serving; there is no indication that mere bigness and complexity will guarantee firmness of purpose, coherence or a sense of responsibility. As long as our government operates largely in a helter-skelter manner as

an *ad hoc* problem-solving agency, responding to this or that populist pressure group, as long as it has no long-term vision of itself or of the national life, one must seriously doubt that bigness or complexity can save us from the fate Lord Macaulay predicted for us, namely an eventual deterioration into chaos or anarchy. And to be countered or overcome such chaos will obviously have to be replaced by some new form of government that will in all likelihood negate the principles of liberty on which our nation was founded, and which we once believed to be the last great hope of mankind.

<sup>1</sup>Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, New York: Vintage Books, 1955, p. 325.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 307.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 319.

<sup>4</sup>Letter from Thomas Babington Macaulay to Henry Stephens Randall, May 23, 1857.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*



# The New "New America"

DONALD MARQUAND DOZER

WRITING in 1958 J. Edgar Hoover observed that after World War II the American people succumbed to "the 'decadence disease'—which has contributed to the decay of so many civilizations throughout history."<sup>1</sup> Five years earlier the House of Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church meeting at Williamsburg, Virginia, expressed concern that "our country seems to be losing that faith and confidence in itself which has characterized our life in other days." It was suffering a disintegration of the elements which were responsible for its historic greatness. And more recently the Nelson Rockefeller report on the *Quality of Life in the Americas* in 1969 acknowledged that

[although] we have produced the great systems and organizations, techniques of awesome capabilities, and a mosaic of useful things and objects here in the United States, . . . we have lost sight of the values which are the real source of our greatness.

If America is failing it is failing because it is acting in ways which violate its characteristic order. We assume that the traditional concepts of American life still control us, whereas in fact they remain a mere mouthing of words devoid of real significance for our twentieth-century America. "We need a serious . . . audit," sug-

gested Lowell Mason, a former Federal Trade Commissioner, in 1959, "to see how many liberties are being carried on our books as assets which we really do not own any more, or which are heavily mortgaged without our knowledge."<sup>2</sup>

A broad appraisal of America's present condition in the nature of an audit has in effect been made in a recent book by George Cabot Lodge, who reports complacently that the "old American ideology" with its emphasis upon the values of competition, property rights, limited government, and individual freedom has already been superseded by the values of socialism—which he approvingly calls "communitarianism."<sup>3</sup> According to this view, American history, interpreted as the unique record of an individual nation existing in a complex of other individual nations, is finished. From now on it must be submerged in a more comprehensive universal history. America is therefore simply resuming the historical continuity from which it deliberately digressed in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

"The central statement" of contemporary historians, Roland Van Zandt has concluded, is that "the 'Old World' is now permanently here, it is all America is—and there is no future possibility of the 'restoration' of the now defunct 'New World' of the

American founders." The United States has once more joined the universal, and its flight from history has ended.<sup>4</sup> We are, as it were, suspended between the Old America and the new Europe, and our writhings in this uncomfortable position explain our travail of spirit. We belong to neither the one world nor the other, but we are comforted by repeated assurances that we belong to "One World." And so the history that was before America repeats itself in our America of the twentieth century.

Those who accept this transformation as desirable if not necessarily inevitable interpret the promise of America's future in terms not of its own past but of the past of the rest of the world, especially that of Europe. They conclude that what we as exponents of our American system have understood to be a natural order, not only for us but for all mankind, has all along been an unnatural order. Back to this old order we now penitently return. Accordingly the United States now ties itself hand and foot to other nations which possess the very same odious characteristics that it formerly repudiated. America's experience as a "New World" has only prepared it to take its place, upon coming of age, as a member of the Old World which it had supposedly left behind. It has merged itself with an anterior system which it always knew lacked peace and harmony, order and justice. And so, concludes Van Zandt,

the common matrix of war and catastrophe that bound all of Europe during the period of the French Revolution, and which America always assumed it was "free of," is now the same matrix of our "new" American world.<sup>5</sup>

The attempt to characterize the post-World War II orientation of the United States, which is statist and socialist in character, as a "new" America or rather as a new "new America" overlooks the essentially reactionary nature of this change. It ac-

tually represents a throwback to a former system identified with the old Europe of the dynasts. The new hungry dynasts trail the tinsel glories of a long-forgotten past. If we accept the conclusion that the new "new America" is only the old pre-eighteenth-century Europe, we deny our own reality as a nation.

The only scientific method of testing the validity of a political theory is to search the historical record and discover how it has worked in practice, for in Professor Hocking's words, "the process of history is . . . a slow, inexorable Judgment."<sup>6</sup> History does not furnish us with any encouragement to believe that if a society is heading for a decline it can save itself from this fate by transforming itself into a socialist-communist society. This theory denies the record of the past, for no previous civilization or even community of the socialist-communist type has had a durable history. The Inca civilization of the high Andes in pre-Columbian America had a longer history as a socialist-communist society than any other society in history, but it existed only in isolation from contemporary Western civilization, it achieved no comparable cultural level, and it appears, upon the basis of modern scholarship, to have reached the limit of its growth at the time it was conquered, having never developed commerce or money or discovered the uses of iron. As it became completely regimented the art of the Inca craftsmen lost its spontaneity and became stereotyped and monotonous.<sup>7</sup> The various experiments in socialist living on a community level that have appeared in the history of the United States, such as Brook Farm, Oneida, New Harmony, Zoar, and others, remain only curious aberrations from the main stream of history. Their blueprints for social action spun out of men's imaginations were overwhelmed by the sober ironies of human nature. The still short-lived socialist phase of

Russia's history hardly justifies the conclusion that this type of regime represents the irresistible "wave of the future."

It appears that of all types of states and civilizations those that are centralized are the least durable and the most susceptible to decay and overthrow. When a people allow themselves to be overwhelmed by centralist conspirators they hasten their demise as a nation and as a civilization. According to Toynbee's analysis, the cause of the breakdown of a civilization is "some failure of self-determination," some loss of responsibility, some forfeiture of "a salutary freedom of choice through having fallen under the bondage of some idol of its own making."<sup>8</sup> Civilizations decline and perish because they fall into the clutches of a dominant minority which is defined as a ruling class that has ceased to lead, has lost its creativity, and has become oppressive. It acts to snuff out the innovating ideas of individuals who are outside the dominant minority and undertakes to prevent them from converting society to their way of life.

As the social scientists thus reinterpret American history to justify the recently imposed reorientation of American life they have not done so in terms of ideas and philosophical concepts. They have instead represented it as the result of blind forces and events playing on America and swinging it in new directions. They either have not understood or have probably been unwilling to avow the revolutionary nature of this change and have shrunk from calling it by its right name.

In all this they pay tribute to Marxist materialism. They are working for the centralization of political and economic power and correspondingly for the subordination of ethical values and the dignity of the individual to state control. The power of the state is being invoked, often in the name of "democracy," to bring about a situation

of complete social and economic integration, for any situation that falls short of displaying such integration is characterized disparagingly as undemocratic. For this reason the steps by which we have arrived at our present situation remain unclear, the forces that have pushed us into it remain undisclosed, and we stand puzzled and mystified in a position we have never occupied before. We are told vaguely that somehow or other this is our destiny.

Before the communist charges of capitalist exploitation the United States shrinks and cringes and tries to make amends for the wealth created by its own genius and industry. Under the lashings of the socialist-communist world we beat our breasts and indulge in mammoth acts of penitential giving, assuming the blame for a considerable amount of the social injustice that is found in all foreign countries. In front of us rises the appalling prospect of our own decline into powerlessness and oblivion. If we accept this process as inevitable then we can only conclude that as our own nation declines we are marching in step with history. According to this view the United States is only sinking back into a course of action predetermined for it by the secular forces of history. We therefore abandon our own uniqueness, forsake our own constitutional processes, and supinely allow the larger historical operation to repeat itself.

Under our American system intelligence, which is the source of inventiveness and creativeness, must be unrestrained. The presumption runs in favor of new modes of doing things. Without the right to independent thought and the freedom to speak and write what we think, we would be a malleable society and could be easily victimized by ambitious leaders. Hence we agree to tolerate all opinions unless or until they cause a breach of the peace or an overt action against duly constituted authorities.

This results in a certain philosophical

confusion as to objectives and procedures, but such confusion appears objectionable only to a would-be dictator, who if given his opportunity might, it is true, create order but in doing so would also destroy popular self-government. A self-governing people must be presented with a wealth of ideas from which it may pick and choose. A free society must encourage variety. To remain free it must live venturesomely, must suffer conflict of opinion, and must permit eccentricity. Progress comes only through heterodoxy, and freedom itself is best measured by the amount of opportunity allowed to an individual to make decisions which are contrary to prevailing opinion. Under a system of free popular government there can be no crimes of opinion. To suppose that any one view or set of views represents complete truth is unintelligible in terms of our American traditions. Both the individual who accepts the traditions carried by our society and the individual who opposes those traditions are integral constituents of the society and therefore carriers of its traditions.

Accordingly, the primary concern of a free and open government is to permit, but not to enforce, the development of the moral and spiritual freedom which is the highest end of man. Its intervention in the life of individuals must be circumscribed within the narrowest possible area compatible with the maintenance of public order and the security of property. It should not undertake to solve any problem that individuals themselves can and should be responsible for solving, for individuals, not government, are the source of all social rights and duties. Only as individuals are recognized as such can the state itself become strong.

The worst enemy of freedom is the concentration of power. Individual freedom is the essential prerequisite to an order that endures. When it is won it will provide the

strongest possible answer to every form of totalitarianism. The alternative to that order is the absolutism, the statism, and the dogmatism of the pre-eighteenth century world. All this represents a substantial perversion of our traditional American conception of government which operates within the framework of a variegated society and accepts the fact of libertarian individualism.

It follows therefore that to enable a society to survive government must be driven back into its proper place. It must be made to stick to its constitutional role and to concern itself solely with things which have been shown by the tragic totalitarianisms of the past to be the proper functions of government. We need a deconcentration or dilution of government returning it to the people whence it originally came.

It is well recognized by the management of enlightened business enterprises that their organization will succeed to the extent that it enables individuals in the organization to grow as individuals. The less of a "cog" the individual member the stronger is the organization. The same is true of government. Only when the individual finds it possible to give his voluntary service and loyalty to government do the two reciprocally complement and strengthen each other. In such a society the whole is greater than the sum of all its parts. As Peter Drucker writes:

Industrial society, more than any other society, needs strong and functioning institutions of local government. Yet in every society that has undergone the process of industrialization, local government has fallen to pieces. . . .

Precisely because it has to be strong, central government in an industrial society has to free itself from the jobs that require local knowledge, local decisions and local action—for the same reason that the top management of a big business, in order to be strong, frees itself

from operating decisions through decentralization to local managers in charge of operating units. . . .

Local affairs must be handled locally. Otherwise they will not get done. If they do not get done locally they drift "upstairs" to central government. This may be called the "law of political gravity"—and it is as inevitable as the physical law of gravity. But local matters cannot be disposed of centrally, or they clog the wheels of central government to the point where they cannot turn at all, and where the major tasks of government—the formulation of national policy, national welfare, justice, defense, or international policy—go by the board. . . .

The major purpose of decentralization is not to make local, operating management stronger—though that too is necessary. It is to make possible effective top management. Without decentralization top management simply cannot do its own job, but gets mired in a mass of details and torn to pieces in a welter of emotional and personal squabbles.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout history men have struggled for individual freedom from tyrannical governments. "Liberty is a conquest," wrote William Graham Sumner, "It does not lie at the beginning of history and of the struggle of the human race on this earth; it lies at the end of it, and it is one of the richest and finest points of civilization."<sup>10</sup> After gaining their freedom citizens have often allowed that same freedom to be taken away from them once more by centralized government. If they vote themselves a tyranny they can derive small comfort from the knowledge that after all it is their tyranny. A domestic tyranny over a people is actually more objectionable and less easily resisted than a foreign tyranny imposed upon them. Is it inevitable that the democratic sovereign must ultimately annihilate itself by transferring its power or allowing its power to be assumed absolutely by one man or a few?

The forces that are propelling us into the new "new America" are much broader than the Communist network. Those who corrupt the sources of our information, who destroy our national values, who act in accordance with the doctrine that the end justifies the use of any means—these also are subversives. Those who throttle the views of an opponent with smears calculated to destroy his reputation—these are subversives. Those who act as if the American people are not capable of governing themselves and must have guardians—a self-appointed elite to tell them what they shall know and what they shall do and what they shall think—these too are subversives.

The real enemy of the United States is within our own borders. Our liberties are less seriously threatened by frontal assaults than by the creeping encroachments upon them by the agencies of centralized power. Individual liberty can be destroyed just as effectively through gradual erosion as through militant and direct challenges. Those who would destroy our society need only destroy the truths upon which it is based. We may think we still retain our system long after we have in fact lost it. We may lose our liberties through defeat by the military forces of a foreign enemy, but we are much more likely to lose them, indeed are already losing them, through unconstitutional and unresisted usurpations of power.

At first glance the assumption made by Gibbon, Mommsen, Bury, Marx, Spengler, and most recently, Toynbee of the inexorable cyclism in history seems so obvious as to be indisputable. Civilizations rise and fall. The civilization of which each of us is a part in this modern world must fulfill its devolutionary role like an organic being proceeding inevitably from birth to adolescence to death. And the record of history lends convincing corroboration to this theory. After the Greeks, the Romans; after

the Romans the empires of Charlemagne and of the Moslems; after them the modern civilizations of Spain, France, England! Now we live in the age of America, but after America what?

Our national life has been characterized by successive periods of dissipation and recuperation. Such periods as the present one when the national energies are being dissipated are marked by a philosophy of negativism and apology, by humiliating self-deprecations and even overt betrayal of the nation's spiritual patrimony, and by massive declarations of guilt. *Mea culpa* is intoned as a national chorus rendered in sackcloth and ashes. Primary truths are twisted and bent; we fall into the habit of dealing falsely with our national purpose and denying the validity of much of our experience as a people. Policy improvisations, no matter how brilliant and how glibly presented, collapse into nothingness when they are not fitted into the pattern of American techniques and objectives. There are periods when a people abandon

their national certitudes and fall into what Pitirim Sorokin has called "eclectic disorganization."

But these periods are sometimes followed by periods of regeneration, resulting from conscious human effort. Public opinion swings around to a new concern for the salvaging of those elements of national strength which are undergoing dissolution. From periods of flying away from the vital center of our national life Americans have passed into periods when they primarily concentrated their energies upon the cultivation of their own soils and the revitalization of their own traditions.

Our nation has reached a critical moment of decision. We must consciously direct both our individual and national effort toward making sure our new "new America" responds to our founding principles. The degree and sincerity of our consecration to this objective will determine whether this nation will hold a tercentennial celebration a century hence.

<sup>1</sup>J. Edgar Hoover, "Counterattack on Juvenile Delinquency," *This Week*, October 26, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>Lowell Mason, *The Language of Dissent*, World Publishing Co., Cleveland and New York, 1959.

<sup>3</sup>*The New American Ideology*, Knopf, New York, 1975.

<sup>4</sup>Roland Van Zandt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of American History*, pp. 78, 237.

<sup>5</sup>Van Zandt, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>6</sup>William Ernest Hocking, *Strength of Men and Nations*, p. 155.

<sup>7</sup>Julian H. Steward and Louis C. Faron, *Native Peoples of South America*, New York, 1959; Burr C. Brundage, *Empire of the Inca*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1963,

*passim*; and Louis Baudin, *A Socialist Empire: The Incas of Peru*, translated from the French by Katherine Woods, D. Van Nostrand Co., Princeton, New Jersey, 1961.

<sup>8</sup>Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Abridgement of vols. VII-X, by D. C. Somervell, Oxford University Press, New York and London, 1957, p. 312.

<sup>9</sup>Peter Drucker, *Landmarks of Tomorrow*, pp. 214-216.

<sup>10</sup>"Liberty and Responsibility," published originally in *The Independent*, 1889, reprinted in Albert Galloway Keller and Maurice R. Davie, eds., *Essays of William Graham Sumner*, 2 vols., Archon Books, 1969, vol. I, pp. 328-329.

# Tonypandy, Timesmanship, and the News from France

C. RICHARD CLEARY

## I

TONYPANDY is a place in South Wales whose fame derives from the massacre that took place there in 1910 when Winston S. Churchill, then Home Secretary, sent in English troops "to shoot down Welsh miners who were striking for their rights."<sup>1</sup> The word "Tonypandy" has a lovely Celtic ring to it; it seems to suggest the world of fantasy, of playful disregard for the dull and the literal. The Tonypandy massacre could not have been more appropriately named. The "massacre" never took place—the story is pure fabrication that has passed into history and legend. Another fantastic aspect of this episode is that among the thousands of Tonypandians who were eye-witnesses to this non-massacre not a single one ever subsequently denied the story. The immediate aftermath of this non-event was that Churchill was "severely criticised in the House of Commons . . . for his 'unprecedented intervention.'"<sup>2</sup>

For poetic as well as pragmatic reasons, the word "Tonypandy" could profitably be incorporated into our language to describe a certain species of journalism. Words like "cant," "pap," "puffery" and "balderdash" all have their place, but seem singly and collectively insufficient to denote the kind of journalism described herein. Many neologisms have recently appeared in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Perhaps their next edition will include the word:

To'nypandy. n. Welsh. A fabricated tale, unquestioningly accepted as truth or fact; the news story rigged to fit the policy of the editor, preconception of the writer or prejudice of the reader.

Schoolbooks in all countries recite a great many well known historical facts that fall into the Tonypandy typology. There are even stone monuments erected to commemorate such non-events. The countryside of Scotland is dotted with engraved monuments, testifying to the martyrdom of many Covenanters, slain in the sixteenth century by the brutal bigots who supported the Catholic Stuart cause. The emotional force of this witness to heroic faith has not been weakened by the documented facts that not a single Covenanter was ever killed for his faith in sixteenth century Scotland; nor was a single one ever legally executed for any but a civil crime (e.g., murder)—and then only after public trial with due process of law. The martyrdom of the Presbyterians is pure Tonypandy. The story is the orthodox version of the Scottish Party That Prevailed: it was justified because their cause was righteous. There are no monuments to the many Catholics, and the many "wavering" Covenanters, who were slain by ambush or massacre—by Covenanters.

Another piece of Tonypandy is the legendary picture of Richard III, the monstrous hunchback who murdered his two nephews.

Though every British schoolboy continues to read this tale in his textbooks, historical scholarship shows:<sup>3</sup> that Richard "Crookback" was an affectionate and loyal family man; that he was an excellent administrator; that he was magnanimous in dealing with his enemies; and that, following his death at Bosworth after a short reign, he was succeeded by the Lancastrian Henry VII who possessed none of these qualities. More significantly, Richard had nothing to gain by the death of his nephews, while Henry's tenuous claim to royal legitimacy was made more secure by the elimination of the two young princes. If presented in a modern English or American court, the evidence against Richard would not support a misdemeanor charge of disorderly conduct. It is even doubtful, in view of his admitted prowess as a swordsman, that his physical deformity was a serious one.

The ultimate seal and sanction for a piece of Tonypandy was to have it immortalized by William Shakespeare in one of his historical dramas—a service he performed for Richard III. America has not yet brought forth a dramatist of Shakespeare's monumental stature and is therefore somewhat handicapped in the manufacture of Tonypandy. But we do have an institution which has become a national monument and, pending the advent of an American Shakespeare, it serves the same function quite well. It is called the *New York Times*.

This is the story of all The News that was Fit to Print about Charles de Gaulle at the time he departed from the presidency of France in April, 1969. The *Times* was lavish in the space allocated and the personnel assigned to this topic; it was generous too in its distribution of Tonypandy—though this was evident only to "foreigners" like the present writer, nonresidents of the realm inhabited by Timesmen.

Such an event—the departure from public life of the last of the giants, one of the most extraordinary statesmen of the century—was bound to elicit copious press notice; and all the more so since he was under no constitutional obligation to reign, nor

even any domestic political pressure to leave, for his regime retained the strong approval of the populace.<sup>4</sup> Yet, he had declared that he would make his continuation in office contingent on the success of a constitutional referendum on governmental decentralization and reform of the Senate, and the amendment was defeated by a narrow margin. Always a man of honor, he kept his word.

In *Times'* reportage of these events, it would have been no more than natural that a few errors should appear, for it is axiomatic that newsstories, written against deadlines, are more prone to error than scholarly historical works; and the ratio of error rises where reportage and speculation concern a foreign nation, such as France.

But the de Gaulle reportage surpassed the norm. There was something special about American press reportage of this event. "It is a fact," says Edmund Stillman, "that the resident American and British press in Paris virtually to a man, or woman, simply cannot see the France that lies before their eyes."<sup>5</sup> To err is human; but to err almost *unfailingly* is something more than human: it is Timesean.

To be fair, it should be said that the *Times* coverage was far from the worst; the *Washington Post*, various newsweeklies and the British press were much worse. To be fairer still, it should also be remembered that the *Times* regards itself as deservedly the most prestigious newspaper in the world and its readers should therefore not be satisfied with a standard of performance that might be expected in other journals. If the *Times* is to be taken at its own estimate, Stillman was probably mistaken as regards Timesmen and Timeswomen: they *could* see what was before their eyes. What they saw was "Another Country"—a fictitious France that sometimes loomed larger than life, often smaller too, in "All The News That's Fit to Print." But larger or smaller, this fabricated France never resembled the actual, historical Gaul. It was part of another universe: the universe of the *New York Times*.



## II

No ONE should plunge unprepared into the realm of Timesmanship, especially not into that region called "France." This world, as delineated in *Times* reportage and commentary during the decade before de Gaulle departed, had its own distinctive landscapes, leitmotifs and conceptual architecture. Without a guide, an alien could get lost there.

In the Timesworld, General de Gaulle figured as the great destroyer, driven by the demons of "old fashioned nationalism" and his own *folie de grandeur*. NATO was all but destroyed by the abrupt departure of France in 1966, rational Western defense policy was undermined by his earlier decision to build a French nuclear force—an act of folly doomed to failure, and beyond the technical and economic abilities of France. These mistakes would be corrected, later, when de Gaulle came to his senses, or was replaced by more realistic leadership. In the real world, the French departure from NATO, however shocking, was not sudden; it was part of a policy that had been spelled out as early as 1958 and pursued step by step thereafter. With or without de Gaulle, NATO was an impotent Areopagus which would continue to thrive as much as ever and remain formidable enough to scare away rabbits. France did not leave the alliance and de Gaulle's successors were not inclined to return to its "integrated" military structure (NATO). French nuclear policy achieved rapid technical success and France is now ranked the number three nuclear power in the world. Professional military experts in the 1960's were never as convinced as Timesmen that French nuclear policy was foolish, or that it would be inefficacious.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, millions of real non-French Europeans feel a bit more comfortable because one continental European state now controls a nuclear arsenal and the power to threaten reprisal to Soviet attack.<sup>7</sup>

The contrast between the world of reality and journalistic Timesean surrealism is no-

where sharper than in the matter of de Gaulle's "irrational" and "ultranationalistic" demolition of a projected United States of Europe. In the news media, de Gaulle, gratuitously and almost singlehandedly, sabotaged this goal of all right thinking people. In the real world—at least the one this writer has been watching for thirty years—no European cabinet or chief of state has ever made a concrete proposal for the creation of a political federation in Europe. The only project that could be called a step in the direction of confederation was sponsored by Charles de Gaulle. It was called the Fouchet Plan and was shelved because it failed to obtain the consent of France's European partners.<sup>8</sup> De Gaulle died without knowing whether his project "was to be, for history, 'some armada foundered in eternal error,' or, for the future, a fair hope riding the waves."<sup>9</sup> Since then, Germany has shown renewed interest in the idea.<sup>10</sup> If this project were eventually to succeed, undoubtedly it would fit into the *Times* canon under the title: The Helmut Schmidt System.

In the firmament of the *Times*, not only was de Gaulle the great destroyer of "Europe," but also the great obstructor of Britain's admission into the Common Market. Numerous reporters echoed this theme, but only one Timesman, the distinguished John Hess, observed that (until 1968): "*Britain never offered to join the Common Market as is.*"<sup>11</sup> The incessant leitmotif of obstructionism would recur on the day de Gaulle departed.

In real life de Gaulle declared that the Bretton Woods international monetary system had become abusive and untenable, that gold was undervalued, and that currency exchange rates should be regulated by their relationships to the real value of gold. In the Timesworld, these views were anathematized, called archaic, and denounced as an "attack" upon the dollar and also upon the pound. In the real world since the sixties, however, the Bretton Woods system has been scrapped, the price of gold has increased five-fold, and the American

dollar now shows signs of becoming as strong as the franc was in the sixties.

In the *Times* universe, de Gaulle's Middle Eastern policy was portrayed as an aberration; he called for concerted Great Power mediation in the Arab-Israeli dispute (and was straitaway pronounced senile by the chief pundit of the editorial page). In the real world, the United States has since 1969 gone far in the direction of the policy defined by de Gaulle. Henry Kissinger is now warmly embraced by Presidents Sadat, Assad and other Arab leaders. Even the *Times* has voiced cautious approval of this turn of events. Timesean surrealism in this instance consisted not in its failure to perceive reality; but in its earlier ridicule of de Gaulle, who had seen it clearer—and several years sooner.

In the Timesworld of the sixties, French *Ostpolitik* figured as an object to be derided or depreciated. The idea of an extra-American initiative towards European East-West détente and pacification was projected by most of the American press as a dangerous Gaullist delusion—symptomatic of his virulent anti-Americanism. Later, in the real world, Chancellor Willy Brandt adopted the policies de Gaulle had initiated with the Eastern bloc. For this, the German leader received high praise from the *Times*; and from Sweden, a Nobel Peace Prize.

How do newsmen get away with such bad reporting? John L. Hess, an atypical Timesman, suggests an explanation:

An answer is that we have the only wheel in town, but the truth is more intriguing. A banker was asked some years ago what he thought of a certain financial news section; he replied that it was excellent—sober, well informed, intelligent—except in banking, where it did not know its proverbial from its proverbial. Experts hardly ever trust the press in their own fields, but their own fields are limited. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.<sup>12</sup>

No one can fool all the people all the

time; but as regards the news from France, it would appear that newsmen can fool most of the people most of the time. In this field, Timesmanship and Tonypandy are Siamese twins.

There are many types of Tonypandy, with varying degrees of fidelity to the primal paradigm. A survey of *Times* Franco-Tonypandy suggests the following typology for the guidance of laymen:

Primal Tonypandy, as in the slaughter of the Scots Covenanters or the massacre of the South Wales miners. Timesmen do not normally propagate this type of Tonypandy and, if they touch upon it, are careful to attribute it to unidentified "local" or "official sources."

Parthenogenetic Tonypandy: birth from the matrix of the press without any outside fertilizing action. This species of story is sometimes documentable, as in the case of the dispatch based upon another newsstory, or upon some other printed source of fiction.

Bisexual Tonypandy: the event-generating story; a discharge of newsprint into the womb of time; insemination of the future, followed by gestation and parturition of a media-event.

Ecological Tonypandy: the fabricated environment, or "background," in which a fact is set. This type is closely related to the Tonypandy graft.

Engrafted Tonypandy, sometimes called the Tonypandy Transplant: the real event in fantasyland perspective; the incorporation of one thing into another, e.g., fact into fiction.

Finally, there is Occult Tonypandy: perception by extra-sensory means of phenomena not visible to non-psychic observers.

Defenders of Timesean journalism could rightly claim that other, still more exotic species of the genus might be identified in the pages of *Izvestia*, the *Washington Post* and many British newspapers; but the present study is confined to those specimens that abound in the *New York Times*, particularly in reportage of *Gesta Gallica*.

All types of Tonypandy must possess at least the appearance of truth. Verisimilitude can normally be achieved only in a story containing some factual elements; and Tonypandy can succeed more easily when the story appeals to a strong emotional desire to believe it. In the case of the famous South Wales massacre (Primal type) there were both facts and emotional appeal to support the story: there were in fact riots in Tonypandy in 1910 and Winston Churchill sent in some men to deal with the situation. Inasmuch as the rioting and destruction of property had alarmed the chief constable of Glamorgan to the point where he called on London for troops, Home Secretary Churchill had little choice but to respond—in some form. Fearing the bloodshed that might result from armed confrontation if soldiers went in, Churchill sent instead a group of London Metropolitan policemen, armed with nothing but their rolled-up mackintoshes.<sup>13</sup> There was also plenty of motivation for propagation of the tale, and a strong desire to believe it. For Churchill's political enemies, the story was a handy stick to smite him with; for the parliamentary spokesmen of the "slain" Welshmen, there was in fact a feeling of resentment for their "oppressors," the English. Even today, Churchill does not lack detractors among the Welsh; he was recently the posthumous object of a 1400 word diatribe ("To Play Churchill Is to Hate Him") by an eloquent Welshman: Richard Burton.<sup>14</sup>

In the category of Parthenogenetic Tonypandy, probably the choicest specimen of the century was the widely publicized newsstory about de Gaulle having been duped by a Soviet agent who had penetrated to a high place in his official entourage. It appeared that the agent had fed the pathetic, half-blind, semi-senile French Chief of State a large amount of anti-Western "disinformation," causing him to adopt dismally wrong-headed foreign policies. This invention first appeared in a novel by Leon Uris where it was attributed to a defecting French intelligence officer.<sup>15</sup>

Whether Mr. Uris was the original fabricator of this fiction or merely a transmission link for the "disinformation" subsection of CIA's Department of Dirty Tricks, is not known. Uris has not been asked, and CIA won't tell. In any case, the story immediately became frontpage news from coast to coast and the press, including the *Times*, gave nearly as much prominence to this non-event as to a real event which occurred a few years later, not very far from Paris. To be precise, in 1974 about 250 miles northwest of the Elysee, where German Chancellor Willy Brandt's intimate advisor, Günter Guillaume, turned out to be a Communist East German agent. The *Times* treatment of this story was commendably sympathetic towards the betrayed Brandt. The sentiment did them credit, even though they must have had a good supply of it in reserve for none had been wasted on de Gaulle when he was victimized by a non-existent Soviet agent.

Bisexual Tonypandy, increasingly frequent in the press, is also sometimes called the "media-event."<sup>16</sup> These are events that happen because they are made to happen. It is no longer good enough just to print what happens; some of what happens results from the fact that "somebody knows that the editor will print it" (as in "Man Announces His Intention to Bite A Dog").<sup>17</sup> Picketing and other public demonstrations can be provoked because "press and television exist and can easily be manipulated into publicizing obscure political causes when presented with enough theatricality to attract the editor's attention."<sup>18</sup> To some extent, the protracted riots and strikes in France, *les événements* of May-June 1968, fall into this category.

Ecological Tonypandy pertains to the general environment or background in which a story is placed. Much of this came from "backgrounders," [briefing sessions] given by State Department officials to newsmen. Former Under Secretary of State George Ball, for example, by no means the most extreme of the anti-Gaullists of the seventh floor of Foggy Bottom in those

days, called him "one of the destructive elements in the larger chemistry of the West," and was convinced that history would "give him bad marks for what he had done to Europe."<sup>19</sup> Less sophisticated officials than Ball were less restrained in their dispraise. Given this kind of briefing, it is not impossible to understand why American journalism went off its rocker on the subject of France and de Gaulle. In 1967, everything he did was interpreted in the Press as evidence of his implacable hostility to America. Various journalists called him "a mortal enemy," a "homocidal lunatic," and "the most ungrateful man since Judas Iscariot."<sup>20</sup>

The landscape of Gaullian anti-Americanism was so pervasive and deep-rooted by that time that even an occasional informed and honest briefing could not break the spell of Tonypandy. John Hess reports one such seance which took place at the American Embassy in Paris late in 1967:

... at a "background" meeting between the American press corps in Paris and Charles E. Bohlen, who had directed the embassy with restraint and distinction. . . . A leading correspondent said "Mr. Ambassador, don't you think that Charley's foreign policy boils down to this: He gets up in the morning and says to himself, 'What can I do that would hurt the United States?' then goes ahead and does it?" Nobody seemed to think this an odd question.<sup>21</sup>

Bohlen replied "I don't think he's anti-American at all," but the press corps was not exorcized.

Readers who can remember the news from France in 1967 will recall which of the two kinds of news was more prominently featured: sober, informed answers, such as Bohlen's; or loaded questions, such as that of the "leading correspondent." For the remainder of the decade, newsmen were almost unanimous in reporting de Gaulle's "delusions," "folly," "spite" and anti-American "malice."<sup>22</sup>

### III

ANYONE acquainted with the French region of the Timesreich could have skipped the editions of April 28-29. The dispatches from France on the occasion of de Gaulle's departure were mainly a reprise of a long familiar *mise-en-scène*, and the new material followed a scenario that could have been written in advance. Several reporters descanted upon the "mood" in Europe and, just as *Times*-readers had been led to expect, the mood was reported as one of "relief," "jubilation," and even "exultation."<sup>23</sup> Some of this was Tonypandy of the occult type; for the relief was "quiet," the jubilation "concealed," and the exultation suppressed by "British officials." A discordant note was introduced by John Hess, who reported that the mood in Paris was "unusually somber."<sup>24</sup> He later declared that "No Frenchman I spoke to exulted; at most, they were defensive and said it was his fault." "The mood . . . was one of shock and chagrin."<sup>25</sup>

Even though it was "only in the Latin Quarter" that there "was elation and open triumph," Timeswoman Gloria Emerson had Parisians talking "endlessly" of the defeat of Charles de Gaulle. Nothing if not scholarly, Miss Emerson revealed her sources. She had interviewed, or heard, two female students, one of whom gave a twenty minute speech to two listeners (counting Miss Emerson?) "on the new Communism she said France needed." The second student averred that de Gaulle "was anti-social; his awareness was stunted." Her third source was a "well-fed barman at the Cafe de la Tourchette," who proclaimed "We have nothing to thank him for."<sup>26</sup> This was deemed fit to print. But again, a discordant note from Hess: "neighborhood bars were largely deserted and the few customers kept their own counsel." As for the Latin Quarter, according to Hess, the students "seemed more interested in one another than in the referendum."<sup>27</sup> But this straightforward observation was nicely balanced by another dispatch, datelined

Rouen, which told of derisive remarks about the general by a 21 year old engineering student accompanied by an otherwise unidentified giggling girl "with a blond pony tail [sic(k)]. . . ."28

On the very day de Gaulle departed, the *Times'* military expert, citing "Alliance sources," was projecting the return of France to NATO and had already described cases of "covert" cooperation between NATO and the defected French Army.<sup>29</sup> Here was a case of Compound Tonypandy: both the engrafted and the occult seemed to be merged. The story asked readers to assume that de Gaulle had been unaware of what his Army was doing, and that he would have opposed any form of "military cooperation" between France and America! This story, though meritorious, does not win first prize for Timesman Tonypandy on the occasion of de Gaulle's departure.

That distinction is reserved for *Times* coverage of the Middle Eastern Question. Every Timesman who touched this question reported "change" in French policy: "The most obvious foreign policy area where things will change is the Middle East."<sup>30</sup> Even if de Gaulle's dauphin were to succeed, Israel would "have reason to rejoice," for the Arabs had "lost their most effective friend in the West," in the French "retreat" from de Gaulle's "partisan position."<sup>31</sup>

Instant confirmation of rejoicing in Israel appeared in another story on the very same page, captioned "Israeli Public Delighted."<sup>32</sup> Even the "officials," though silent, were "smiling." "The general had become public enemy No. 1 in Israel, exceeding even the Arab leaders as an object of scorn since the Arab-Israeli war of June, 1967." As the result of "a cynical betrayal of a friend by an aging leader," de Gaulle had been an "implacable foe." Now, the French arms embargo, imposed as a "punishment," could be lifted. Any change would be an improvement.

The good news from the Franco-Israeli front was underscored in many subsequent news stories and editorials. A *Times* edi-

torial (1 June 1969) discerned a "more impartial attitude in the Middle East," which Mr. Tanner later confirmed, following Pompidou's election (16 June 1969): "End of Embargo Possible:" ". . . Mr. Pompidou has promised to return to a policy of impartiality. . ."

Since the Middle Eastern question is indeed important, it is worthwhile to review what had really happened and to note the present state of the question. On the eve of the 1967 war, de Gaulle had told Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban that if Israel were attacked, France would not allow it to be destroyed; but France would condemn any aggression initiated by Israel. In view of intimate links between the French and Israeli military establishments, de Gaulle probably had reason to suspect that an Israeli attack was imminent. But de Gaulle did the inexcusable; he made an accurate forecast of the consequences of an Israeli attack; ". . . later you would find yourselves involved in growing difficulties locally and from the international point of view. . . ." Alone among Israel's friends, he warned them that their conquests could only increase international tensions and that, as conquerors they would "gradually come to be blamed."<sup>33</sup> Like all contemporary military analysts, de Gaulle was aware of Israel's enormous military superiority over the Arabs. The question of Israel's "survival" in 1967 was never in doubt—except in the minds of millions of fans of daily newspaper melodrama.

De Gaulle's "partiality" took the form of an arms embargo against all belligerents in the ensuing Six Day War. At first a leaky embargo *vis-à-vis* Israel, it was tightened after Israeli commandos demolished a large part of Lebanon's civilian air fleet at Beirut, and Israeli agents and sympathizers in France had illegally snatched from a French port five small warships earlier ordered by Israel.

In addition to de Gaulle's earlier warning to Israel, there was his infuriating public declaration of 27 Nov. 1967 that Israel's occupation of the captured Arab territories

could not take place "without oppression, repression, and a resistance . . . forming against it which, in its turn, it [Israel] is describing as terrorism . . . it is perfectly obvious that the conflict is only suspended. . . ." <sup>34</sup> In the Times realm, the obvious had not yet been suspected.

The conflict, he believed could not be solved "except through international channels," and "such a settlement must be based on the evacuation of the territories taken by force, the end of all belligerency and the mutual recognition of each state involved by all the others. . . ." This would require the "agreement of the Great Powers"; and France would be "prepared in advance to render political, economic and military assistance on the spot in order that the agreement be effectively applied." <sup>35</sup>

After the Middle Eastern war of 1973, the ghost of de Gaulle spoke through the lips of an American President. The October War, with its concomitant American military airlift to Israel, the resultant world-wide nuclear alert and consequent Arab oil embargo, galvanized President Ford to adopt the Gaullist position of six years earlier: "Most Americans are willing," he said, "to take great risks to preserve the state of Israel, but they are *not* willing to take great risks to preserve Israel's conquests." <sup>36</sup>

As for French Middle Eastern policy, no substantial change was needed. The arms embargo against *both* sides remained in place for six years; it was lifted after the 1973 October War. But French Middle Eastern policy continues to baffle the *Times*: though pleased by the French "retreat" from pro-Arab "partisanship," they recently printed without comment another story indicative of post-Gaulle "impartiality." It was captioned: "France Will Help Egypt Make Arms: Giscard Agrees with Sadat in Setting Up Armaments Industry." <sup>37</sup>

On the occasion of de Gaulle's departure, the *Times* did not fail to remind its readers that he had been the great obstacle to British entrance into the Common Mar-

ket, and to proclaim that the way was now open to Britain's entrance. Neither reportage nor commentary suggested that the general never disfavored British membership—provided it was on terms of equality with the others. Unlike Anglo-American officials and newsmen, de Gaulle had never deluded himself, nor misled others about English unwillingness at any time in the sixties to accept the obligations of membership. <sup>38</sup>

Walter Lippmann, precisely because he understood French policy, had foreseen Britain's eventual entrance long before the *Times* prognosticated it. Lippmann knew that it was always a mistake to take de Gaulle at less than his word, and the general had declared (May, 1967) that should England meet the indispensable conditions, "how warmly France would welcome this historic conversion"; <sup>39</sup> and a few months later (November 1967), "Everything depends . . . on the determination and action of the great British people, which would make it one of the pillars of Europe." <sup>40</sup>

In the press, Britain's eventual admission into the Common market in 1973 was ascribed to the death of de Gaulle, just as the *Times* had forecast (*Post de Gaulle ergo propter ejus mortem*). Not much attention was given by the *Times*—and none on the day of his departure—to the other great obstacles that had to be removed, e.g., Harold Macmillan, Harold Wilson and the Labor Party, the long, silent non-debate in Parliament about the real issues involved in the decision, and several others. <sup>41</sup> But why quibble about details? England *did* enter, and this time the *Times* was right—just as a stopped clock tells the right time two times a day.

A final note about *Times* commentary on de Gaulle's departure: students of gerontology must have been impressed by a declaration in the leading editorial that the general had departed "with his faculties unimpaired." This was a radical reversal of an earlier editorial diagnosis (circa 1967) of senility and, if valid, was the first time

in medical history this dread affliction had ever been cured by any means other than death.<sup>42</sup>

#### IV

IN THE WEEKS following de Gaulle's resignation it became clear that there was only one issue in the presidential campaign: "continuity" versus "change." To anyone familiar with French electoral geography it was also clear that Alain Poher—the anti-Gaullist contender and political nonentity, whose candidacy was made to seem formidable by press puffery—would be returned to obscurity.<sup>43</sup> There was still time for the Pontifex Maximus of the *Times* editorial page to cancel his berth on the *Titanic*. Instead, he embarked on a titanic trip to Tonypandy, which yielded a classic specimen of the compound engrafted species of this genus. The editorial, declaring that de Gaulle's policy had been a "casualty" of the campaign, forecast French "resumption of a sense of responsibility," a return (once again) to a "more impartial attitude in the Middle East," a future policy in "striking contrast" to that of de Gaulle, and even the possibility that France might return to the "imaginative leadership" of the Fourth Republic.<sup>44</sup>

To historians, the editorial suggested a really "striking contrast": between the Timesuniverse and the real world. In the latter, the "imaginative leadership" of the Fourth Republic had included such triumphs of statesmanship as ten years of war in Indochina, the abortive Suez adventure—followed by two years of government-inspired journalistic anti-Americanism, short-sighted unconcern about the problem of decolonization in French sub-Sahara, and several years of bloodshed, brutality and torture in the cause of keeping *Algerie Française*.

In the aftermath, the anti-Gaullist champion of change was defeated by the dauphin, Georges Pompidou. At this juncture, the *Times* lead editorial adopted the then current French communist line:

Pompidou and Poher were "more alike than different." France's future was "more likely to resemble Poherism without Poher than Gaullism without de Gaulle." (*Ou sont les Poherists d'antan?*) In summing up, the editorial pontificated that France had rejected "the center candidate," but also "opted for the middle of the road."<sup>45</sup> With fewer verbal contortions, Henry Giniger's dispatch (same day) conceded that the French electorate had said "Yes to Gaullism."<sup>46</sup> The *Times* that day embodied the best tradition of "balance" in coverage of French affairs; it presented (with unequal prominence) both sides, two viewpoints: the documented and the demented.

Since 1969, the *Times* has striven valiantly to maintain its fading image of de Gaulle and France, with its attendant expectations of wholesome changes to follow the exit of the ogre of the Elysee. On the occasion of his death nineteen months after resigning, an obituary notice lamented that he had chosen to be merely President of France when he could have been First President of the United States of Europe. The Pompidou regime was a vexation to the *Times*: foreign policy changes were insubstantial; its domestic policy was somewhat less liberal than de Gaulle's. Pompidou's successor, Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, was often presented as the first authentic post-Gaulle non-Gaullist, a characterization hard to swallow for those who remember that Giscard and his Independent Republican party had always been a part of the Gaullist parliamentary coalition,<sup>47</sup> Giscard himself a member of several Gaullist-Pompidoulian cabinets, and key posts in his cabinet are held either by Gaullists or by non-partisan "technicians"—a pattern de Gaulle himself had instituted.

One of the few highly competent foreign correspondents, John Hess, returned from his Paris post (and later turned up writing about soup in New York). Flora Lewis, an otherwise competent journalist who appears to possess impeccable credentials as an anti-Gaullist True Believer, became chief of the Paris Bureau.

Until 1969, Timesman C. L. Sulzberger had shed a bit of light on the Other France in his Op-page articles, but his columns became less luminous after the "Last of the Giants" departed. Unlike some of his colleagues, Sulzberger was never an "occultist," and could not reestablish contact with his departed source.

The American press gradually lost interest in France and the size of its Paris corps was reduced. (Readers of the French press, however, were sometimes regaled with accounts of reproaches by the opposition against the Giscard Government for having betrayed de Gaulle.) American reporters in foreign capitals had often made "a bee-line from the airport to the [American] Embassy" in quest of "foreign" news;<sup>48</sup> apparently they still do.

Since 1969, tensions and policy differences between France and America have not disappeared but have been reduced. Indeed, this process began before, not after, the departure of de Gaulle; it was due in large part to the departure of a number of American officials, e.g., George Ball, W. W. Rostow, Dean Rusk, and Lyndon Johnson; and the arrival of others, such as Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon. There have been policy changes—mainly in America,

which ended the Vietnam war, terminated the Bretton Woods system, adopted a more sensible Middle Eastern policy and began a détente with both China and the Soviet Union.

But the *Times* retained a remarkable consistency in its version of France. It will be recalled that one of the distinguishing characteristics of Tonyandy is the absence of denial or correction of the original concoction. Newspapers often print letters to the editor seeking to correct misinformation, or to protest fictions parading as facts, or fantasies disguised as sober opinion. If letters regarding *Times* Franco-Tonyandy ever appeared in that world renowned forum of opinion, this writer must have missed them.

Perhaps it is pointless to tilt at Tonyandy; the true midwife of the "Daughter of Time," whose name is Truth, is the careful historian, not the critic of contemporary journalism. But then, one remembers with a shudder that history textbooks still tell of the villainy of King Richard III and the martyrdom of the Scots Covenanters. And the image of de Gaulle as intransigent, egomaniacal obstructor of progress could also pass into the history and legend of the English-speaking world.

<sup>1</sup>Josephine Tey, *The Daughter of Time* (New York: Macmillan, 1953) p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>For the rehabilitation of Richard III, see for example Paul M. Kendall (New York: Norton, 1955), pp. 465-514.

<sup>4</sup>Philip M. Williams and Martin Harrison, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1973); pp. 389-420.

<sup>5</sup>"Another Country" *New York Times*, 24 July 1973, p. 35. Stillman is director of the European Division of the Hudson Institute, and co-author of *L'envoi de la France: Portrait d'un Pays dans les Années 80*.

<sup>6</sup>Wilfrid L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton, N.J. 1971), pp. 355-384.

<sup>7</sup>Bernard Brodie, *War and Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 399 ff.

<sup>8</sup>Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor*, tr. by Terence Kilmartin (New

York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), pp. 193-198. A comprehensive account of de Gaulle's utterances and actions regarding European unification is Emond Jouve, *Le General de Gaulle et la Construction de l'Europe, 1940-1966* (Librairie generale de droit et de jurisprudence, R. Pichon et R. Durand-Aujais, Paris, 1967) 2 vols. Preface by Maurice Duverger. A prefatory statement indicated that this fine work would be translated and published in English, but this has not yet happened.

<sup>9</sup>de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, p. 198.

<sup>10</sup>"Bonn seeks control of Market Heads: Wants stronger Control of Joint European Projects," *New York Times*, 30 Nov., 1975. This dispatch, based on a 60 page high level German policy review and a briefing by Chancellor Schmidt, indicates that Germany still wants a system essentially the same as the one de Gaulle sponsored. None of the 14 paragraphs of the story mentioned the original French (Fouchet) plan.



<sup>11</sup>John L. Hess, *The Case for de Gaulle: An American Viewpoint* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1968), p. 75.

<sup>12</sup>Tey, p. 99.

<sup>13</sup>*New York Times*, 24 Nov. 1974, Arts and Leisure Section, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>*Topaz* (New York: Bantam edition, 1968). In this purported *roman à clef*, de Gaulle is represented by General Pierre de la Croix. *Topaz* received lavish praise from newspaper literary critics, who were so busy lauding the historical (i.e. Tonypanadian) content of the book that they failed to perceive that its author had created a new art-form. Capote had already given America the non-fiction novel; from Uris came the first authentic "non-novel fiction."

<sup>15</sup>Russell Baker, "Sunday Observer: Man Announces His Intention to Bite A Dog," *New York Times Magazine*, 14 Dec. 1975, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>George W. Ball, *The Discipline of Power* (Little, Brown and Company, 1968), p. 120.

<sup>19</sup>Hess, *The Case For de Gaulle*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup>C. Richard Cleary, "The American Press vs. de Gaulle," *Four Quarters* (Vol. XX, No. 3, March 1971), p. 4.

<sup>22</sup>Dispatches by Anthony Lewis (p. 1) and David Binder (p. 16), *New York Times*, 29 April 1969; also dispatch by Gloria Emerson, "The Latin Quarter is Openly Gleeful," (p. 17), and another, same page, unsigned, captioned: "Israeli Public Delighted."

<sup>23</sup>John Hess, "An Unusually Somber Paris Says 'Adieu'" *New York Times*, April 28, 1969, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup>Ltr., J. L. Hess to author, 16 Dec. 1975. Hess recently wrote a second fine book about France: *Vanishing France* (New York: Quadrangle Press, 1975).

<sup>25</sup>*New York Times*, 28 April 1969, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>Paul Hofmann, "Little Regret in Rouen," *New York Times*, 29 April, 1969, p. 17.

<sup>28</sup>Drew Middleton, "Military Role Foreseen" *New York Times*, 29 April 1969, p. 16.

<sup>29</sup>Henry Tanner, "After de Gaulle," *New York Times*, 29 April 1969, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>*New York Times*, 29 April 1969, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup>Press Conference of General de Gaulle, 27 November 1967, *French Foreign Policy*, July-December 1967, Ambassade de France, N.Y. p. 135 ff.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>Joseph Alsop, "Open Letter to an Israeli friend," *New York Times Magazine*, 14 Dec. 1975, p. 67.

<sup>36</sup>*New York Times*, 15 Dec. 1975, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup>C. Richard Cleary, "The American Press vs. de Gaulle," *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>Press Conference, May 16, 1967, *Major Addresses Statements and Press Conferences of General Charles de Gaulle*, March 17, 1964-May 16, 1967. French Embassy, N.Y., p. 180.

<sup>39</sup>Press Conference, 27 Nov. 1967, *French Foreign Policy: Official Statements, Speeches and Communications*, July-December 1967, Ambassade de France, N.Y., p. 141.

<sup>40</sup>Kenneth N. Waltz, *Foreign Policy and the Democratic Process*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1967) pp. 225-266.

<sup>41</sup>"De Gaulle's Defeat," *New York Times*, 28 April 1969.

<sup>42</sup>Even the *Times'* roving Gaullologist, C. L. Sulzberger, was convinced that the Gaullist Pretender was no longer favored to win. In an article printed in the same Ed-Op section as the Pontiff's Editorial, he kept one foot firmly planted in each of the two worlds: The Timesean and the Other, "Foreign Affairs: If the Dauphin succeeds," *New York Times*, 1 June 1969, Week in Review, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup>"The French Election," *New York Times*, 1 June 1969, Week in Review, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup>"France's Gaullist Future," *New York Times*, 16 June 1969, p. 46. "Center" of what? "Middle" of which road? The late George Orwell, who first defined "Doublespeak," would have been delighted by this interesting discovery in political geometry.

<sup>45</sup>"French Paradox: No to de Gaulle, Yes to Gaullism," *New York Times*, 16 June 1969, p. 12.

<sup>46</sup>Jean Charlot, *The Gaullist Phenomenon: The Gaullist Movement in the Fifth Republic*, tr. by Monica Charlot and Marianne Neighbour (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1971), pp. 109-119.

<sup>47</sup>Ltr., Hess to Cleary, *op. cit.*

# The Grace of God at Maple Grove Methodist

ROBERT DRAKE

MY FATHER was one of five brothers, all raised out in the country from Woodville in a little community—not even a village, just a neighborhood—called Maple Grove. And their whole life out there revolved around the Maple Grove Methodist Church, which for them was not only a religious center but a social and cultural one as well. There wasn't even a general store out there, so people had to go somewhere else to congregate and visit with each other; and the Maple Grove Methodist Church was the obvious place.

It's hard to know why there was no Baptist Church at Maple Grove: Baptists certainly thrived in that soil and on that water (particularly, for them, the water). Perhaps the Methodists had simply gotten there before they did and beaten them out: after all, it was a small community. My grandfather Drake—the one we called Pa—may even have been typical of the times, which, for all their sectarianism, were fairly tolerant, perhaps even characteristic of the frontier, with its openness and freedom. Or he may even have helped to set a pattern of behavior because, when he arrived out at Maple Grove from Virginia after the Civil War (he had come out to Tennessee to recoup his fortunes, which, I'm sorry to say, he never did), he was a life-long, dyed-in-the-wool Baptist. But there was no Baptist Church out there, as I said; and then he married my grandmother, who was a Methodist, and joined the church with her. And I suppose that was the last he ever thought of it, but the Virginia kinfolks never forgot it and more or less held it against him till the day he died. Of course, he didn't see them often anyhow—mainly just when he went back there (Virginia was always “back,” suggesting its historic

primacy, I suppose, while Texas was always “out,” which conjured up visions of the tall and uncut) for Confederate reunions. They, the Virginia folks, all belonged to the Mt. Moriah Baptist Church at Ballsville in Powhatan County, and that was the hub of the universe as far as they were concerned. (They were all buried there too, sooner or later.) So it turned out to be Maple Grove for Pa, and Mt. Moriah for them. And I always thought it was more or less six of this and half a dozen of the other: people have to build their lives around *something*, I suppose. But I don't imagine some of them—particularly, the Virginia Baptists—would have seen it that way.

So Daddy and his brothers were all brought up in the bosom of the Maple Grove Methodist Church, and that was all they knew or cared to know till much later in life when they were grown and married and had moved into town from out in the country. But, in some ways, they never got away from Maple Grove and the Maple Grove Methodist Church because they all talked about it for the rest of their lives. For one thing, they all seemed to have had *so much fun* there. I know years later when one of the aunts (the widow of one of my uncles) was talking to me about it, she said, “O, they did have a lot of fun at the church back then. But it's all different now. Why, they're so dignified up there now, I don't suppose anyone dares crack a smile.” Now I myself don't think the community—or the world—has gotten any more sober-sided or serious-minded since the Drakes were holding forth at Maple Grove; it's just that they have other outlets for humor now, other places to play. And the church has become just another place with a specific function and use for them; it isn't the hub of their

universe any more. What is? The television screen? The football field? Perhaps no single thing, no single place does—or can—now fulfill the function for anybody that the Maple Grove Methodist Church did for all the Drakes back in the old days. And, in some ways, I think that's a loss: the church now no longer the everyday center of community life but just another slot to plug in to one day a week, serving one purpose and one purpose only. And it all sounds very correct and very proper perhaps but also, I think, very dull and very dead. Where's the old life, where's the old fun now?

And they did have fun in the old days. But religion wasn't any the less meaningful to them for all that. The Christian gospel is, after all, a fairly ridiculous proposition. (God loves you, it says, not because you're good—which you aren't—or clean or anything else you may be or may have done yourself but simply because He wants to and it's His pleasure. And that does seem like a damned fool thing for Him to do. Let's face it: the grace of God may be the Good News we've all been waiting for, but it's something of an absurdity too.) So I don't think the Drakes saw anything inconsistent between religion and fun though of course they probably wouldn't have said so in so many words. But the world, for all its faults, was good (after all, God had made it Himself); and life was good if hard and demanding in the work and the sweat required on the farm. And it was good to be alive. Surely, the joy of the Lord and the delights of this world had something in common.

O, when I was little, I used to get so tired of all the stories about the Maple Grove Methodist Church. For one thing, the Drakes told them all over and over again whenever they got together; and it all used to bore me to death and I wondered why it didn't affect them all the same way. Who in the world wanted to hear all those old stories that everybody already knew by heart anyway? Well, of course, years later after most of them were dead, I realized

that they hadn't been telling all those stories because they were new but simply because they were good: novelty might wear off but quality never did. But that's something you can't know until you're grown. And when they told and retold those stories, the past was recreated for them, full of life and meaning; and it continued to give meaning to their lives on into the present. It wasn't just a sentimental exercise in nostalgia either but an act of piety which continually renewed and refreshed them by reminding them of their original and abiding roots in their time and place, their reality, which included both past and present and looked forward into the future—the future discerned through a past recalled and a present lived in the light of this recollection—sobering, blessing, humbling, rewarding. And it was all—past, present, and future—part of an overarching eternity. But again, you can't know this until you're older. And certainly it's hard to do so in the world we live in today, where the past is mainly either ignored or exploited and the present and perhaps the future are seen as the only realities and eternity goes by the board.

But anyhow the Drakes had fun at church. And as I said earlier, it didn't mean they were any the less reverent: God and fun weren't mutually exclusive but perhaps complementary. Many of their favorite stories had to do with the preachers who served the church out there and their various eccentricities and peculiarities. One of them, a man new on the circuit, told them after his first sermon there that he could have killed hogs and hung the meat up right there in church with no fear of its spoiling because they were the coldest bunch of people he had ever preached to in his life. Now I don't think he was a fire-eating evangelist type who wanted to see an excessive display of emotion, but he did want to touch their hearts (remember Wesley sitting in Aldersgate Church and feeling his heart strangely warmed?). But it wasn't a cold congregation at all, Daddy said: they were just all on their good be-

havior for his first sermon. Certainly, they could let themselves go enough at the right times—like in the middle of a protracted meeting when Cousin Birdie Sneed would start roaming the aisles for souls to wrestle with and bring to Christ. And since she had a hare-lip and always insisted on kissing all her converts, all the young folks who hadn't joined the church would start jumping out the windows and doors or anything else they could get out of when they saw her coming.

But sometimes they didn't jump soon enough, like the time young Tom Maynard had been carrying on a prolonged courtship with Mary Ann Graves and everybody thought it was high time they got married. But Tom didn't do a thing till old man Graves, Mary Ann's father, who had been a steward in the church since before Christ, Daddy said, came up to pray over him when the preacher called mourners up to the altar and he went up. And then he just laid his hands on young Tom's head and said, for all the world to hear, "O, Lord, soften this young sinner's hard heart because, as sure as God made little apples, he's going to marry my daughter." And young Tom might not have been thinking of marriage before but he knew he had better do so then, and he and Mary Ann were married right after the revival was over.

But mourners' benches were a thing of the past now, Daddy said; and he thought it was a bad thing. He said, "You quit preaching Christ crucified and take the mourners' benches out of the churches, and you might as well close the doors." Shouting too was out now; and though Daddy didn't incline that way himself, he said he thought it might be a loss. Why, he said, if you started shouting in church now, they'd probably have you arrested for disturbing the peace. And I don't know that he ever thought religion was necessarily peaceful ("not peace but a sword"?). Like he said, it needed to have some "spizerinctum" in it. (What would we call it now—charisma?) Anyhow, it had certainly not been like that out at Maple Grove in the old

days. When the preacher called mourners during a big meeting, everybody but the most hardened would go up to the altar to get "reconditioned," as Daddy put it. (Methodists were supposed to be great believers in back-sliding and falling from grace—unlike the Baptists and their "once in grace, always in grace.") And sometimes the preacher would call on the various repentant sinners to offer individual prayers. And there were memorable moments then, like the time old Mr. Jenkins ran out of something to pray about in the middle of his supplication; so he just said, "O, Lord, bless us while we stop to rest." And there was dead silence except for the Drakes, all of whom were having a giggling spell. Another time Pa Drake, my grandfather, volunteered to pray when the preacher asked for somebody to lead the repentant in prayer. And on the way home, his neighbor, Mr. James K. Polk Harrison, who had been in the state legislature and owned a wonderful hunting dog named Blanche that he had been offered and refused fifty dollars for, said to him: "Now, Bill, I think it's fine for a man to pray in public. And if they ever call on you, you do it. But, Bill, don't ever volunteer any more." And all the Drakes would die laughing at that story. Because though Pa was often eloquent in conversation, that's about all he was eloquent at. As a transplanted Virginia gentleman, he wasn't very weary in well doing where work was concerned either; and they would all have starved to death if it hadn't been for Grandma, I gathered.

Another time, Uncle Buford, the youngest of the brothers, who was naturally shy and retiring, was mortified to death when the preacher called for volunteers to pray and one of the Drake boys nudged him and said, in a stage whisper, "Say one, Buford, say one." So he croaked out, "Stir us up, O Lord, stir us up," and then clammed up, turning crimson at his own boldness. They never let him forget that either; and for years afterward, whenever they wanted to put the quietus on him, especially out in

public, they would say, "Say one, Buford, say one." And that would be the end of him. And they all loved to tell about the time when Daddy was four years old and had learned a memory verse for Children's Day that went: "Do your best, your very best, and do it all the time." Only when Daddy rose up to recite, scared pop-eyed of course, he said, "Do your best, your very best, and do it in the day time."

O, levity certainly had its place out there all right. Once Brother Martin, a much loved preacher on the "charge" (as Methodist churches were often called in those days) walked in to preach a Sunday night sermon. And it had been a long day in the hot summer time, and all the young folks were tired and worn out from going to Sunday School and church in the morning and visiting back and forth with each other in the afternoon. And Brother Martin asked them, "Young people, what shall I preach about tonight?" And Daddy replied, "About twenty minutes." And of course that almost broke up the meeting right there.

Then there were the strange and arresting texts that the various preachers chose for their sermons. One of the most memorable was "Ephraim is a cake not turned," which I always thought was ridiculous and surely invented by one of the Drakes just for a laugh until years later when I was a graduate student at Yale and I heard one of the Divinity School professors preach on that very same text (Hosea 7:8) and he expounded it as a comment on people's lives without God: they were cakes that had not been turned, in other words, half-baked. (Who ever would have thought Maple Grove would be vindicated in New Haven, Connecticut? But stranger things than that have happened in my life.) Then there was the text, "She did and she didn't," which I still believe apocryphal; at any rate, I've never been able to locate it. (That was the text preached on the time old Brother Lucas got so carried away with the drama, complete with gestures, of his own sermon that he backed off the rostrum and fell

sprawling into the middle of the congregation. And of course all the Drakes laughed.) But there *was*, for real, the text "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8), which seemed to cover a multitude of failings, as it presumably did those of the woman who anointed the Savior's head with oil, and pretty well nail down the human condition—or at any rate, man's own efforts to ameliorate it, which couldn't amount to much but were nevertheless worthy of note as being a nice try. Still, it all looked forward to the grace of God: you certainly couldn't do it by yourself.

And in a curious way I think that's what all the Maple Grove Methodist Church tales—the Drake tales, I called them—added up to—the grace of God and its wonder, its absurdity, and its absolute necessity for poor foolish deluded man. What could be funnier, what could be sadder than man's predicament, here in this middle state, the glory, jest, and riddle of the world—poor forked creature that he was, with all his strutting and fretting for one brief hour? One was often torn between tears and laughter at the spectacle (were they not but different sides of the same coin?); and the Drakes and their kind chose to laugh. But at the same time, they knew how to cry too: all of them were big-hearted, "feeling" creatures to whom both tears and laughter came easily. But laughter in church—what about that? Well, why not, given the human animal and his characteristic foolishness? And couldn't God laugh too, to see the creature He had so fearfully and wonderfully made always trying to forget his Maker and set up shop on his own and quite literally make a damned fool of himself? How funny, how sad, and yet how human! Surely, that's the long view God must have taken of it (and He did go in for long views, I supposed); and finally, I think that's the view the Drakes took as well. But, as I said earlier, that's something they couldn't have put into words then and something I certainly couldn't have known until I was a lot older myself.

## INDEX TO REVIEWS

- |     |  |                     |
|-----|--|---------------------|
| 92  | <p>“The Picture of a Remnant”<br/> George H. Nash, <i>The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945</i></p>             | Henry Regnery       |
| 95  | <p>“A Philosopher’s Garland”<br/> Henry Regnery, ed., <i>Viva Vivas!</i></p>   | Hugh Mercer Curtler |
| 96  | <p>“The Historical Henry”<br/> Richard R. Beeman, <i>Patrick Henry: A Biography</i></p>  | J. Michael Bordelon |
| 98  | <p>“Scourge of Time-servers”<br/> C. J. Fox, ed., <i>Enemy Salvoes: Selected Literary Criticism by Wyndham Lewis</i></p>               | David Levy          |
| 100 | <p>“The Doctor Angelicus”<br/> James A. Weisheipl, O. P., <i>Friar Thomas d’Aquino</i></p>   | Haven Bradford Gow  |
| 102 | <p>“Thomas Wolfe and His Clan”<br/> Elaine Westall Gould, <i>Look Behind You, Thomas Wolfe. Ghosts of a Common Tribal Heritage</i></p> | Francis Russell     |
| 104 | <p>“Serene and Enduring Jane”<br/> Joel Weinsheimer, ed., <i>Jane Austen Today</i></p>   | R. D. Stock         |
| 106 | <p>“Latin and its Progeny”<br/> Mario Pei, <i>The Story of Latin and the Romance Languages</i></p>                                     | James W. Poultney   |
| 108 | <p>“Romania’s ‘Liberal’ Mask”<br/> Ion Ratiu, <i>Contemporary Romania: Her Place in World Affairs</i></p>                              | Juliana Geran Pilon |
| 109 | <p>“A Far Eastern Ambuscade”<br/> Phyllis Schlafly and Chester Ward, <i>Ambush at Vladivostok</i></p>                                  | A. James McAdams    |

## *The Picture of a Remnant*

HENRY REGNERY

**The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945**, by George H. Nash, *New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976. 560 pp. \$20.00.*

MR. NASH has given us a scholarly, thorough study of what he chooses to call the "conservative intellectual movement in America," a study, moreover, that is a pleasure to read, but in all the 345 pages of text he carefully refrains from defining just what it is that he is talking about. On the first page of his Introduction he writes, "I doubt that there is any single, satisfactory, all-encompassing definition of the complex phenomenon called conservatism, the content of which varies enormously with time and place," but by the time he reaches page 342, he is willing to concede that in spite of the "fascinating heterogeneity in conservative thought . . . most right-wing intellectuals readily agree on certain fundamental 'prejudices.'" These include, he says,

a presumption (of varying intensity) in favor of private property and a free enterprise economy; opposition to Communism, socialism, and utopian schemes of all kinds; support of strong national defense; belief in Christianity or Judaism (or at least the utility of such belief); acceptance of traditional morality and the need for an inelastic moral

code; hostility to positivism and relativism; a "gut" affirmation of the goodness of America and the West.

Such "prejudices" would hardly be sufficient to sustain an intellectual movement of any substance, but this is about as far as Nash is willing to go.

Nash's reluctance to commit himself to a definition of conservatism is rather characteristic of the whole book. It is a remarkably thorough account of the sources, the motivating forces and the substance of American conservative thought since the Second World War; he has read everything, the books, articles, even the correspondence of those who have taken a leading part in the drama and has interviewed many of them, and has then put it all together with great skill and facility, but always at a distance, without commitment, one can almost say, without participation. Nash's ability to keep his distance becomes all the more remarkable when one considers some of the characters involved: Willmoore Kendall, Russell Kirk, William F. Buckley, Jr., Richard Weaver, Frank Meyer, Stephen Tonsor, among others, all of them men of strong feelings and definite convictions, and all of them quite willing to define and defend what they mean when they talk about conservatism.

Nash begins his study, quite properly, with an account of the various strands of thought, or, perhaps better, the various

manifestations of the revolt against liberalism, which eventually came together, more or less coherently, in the conservative movement. His first chapter, "The Revolt of the Libertarians," is devoted to the work of such men as Henry Hazlitt, Frank Chodorov, Leonard Read, John Chamberlain, Ludwig von Mises, F. A. Hayek, and Albert Jay Nock. None of us who read them when they first came out, Nock's *Memoirs of A Superfluous Man* in 1943 and Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* in 1944, will forget the impact of these two books. As much as Nock would have resisted being put into any sort of movement, and in spite of Hayek's insistence that he is not a conservative at all, Nash is quite right in giving them both an honored place among the fathers of modern conservatism.

It was Peter Viereck, with his book, *Conservatism Revisited*, in Nash's opinion, who "popularized the term 'conservative' and gave the nascent movement its label."<sup>1</sup> Viereck may have been one of the first to use the word "conservatism" to describe the growing movement of opposition to latter-day liberalism and its ultimate consequence, totalitarianism, but his rather pale, epigrammatic formulations would never have brought about a vigorous intellectual movement. It was the work of such men as Richard Weaver, Eric Voegelin, Leo Strauss and Eliseo Vivas which led to the development of conservatism as a coherent body of ideas, and prepared the way for Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind* which, as Nash puts it, "dramatically catalyzed the emergence of the conservative intellectual movement."<sup>2</sup> In spite of the influence of such economists as Hayek and von Mises, Nash correctly concludes: "In its origins, the new conservatism was primarily a philosophic, literary and aesthetic—not an economic—phenomenon."<sup>3</sup> It was doubtless this fact which was the basis of the appeal of the new conservatism particularly to the more perceptive members of the student generation, for who, as Russell Kirk once put it, would give his life for a higher standard of living?

Mr. Nash's reluctance to penetrate the thicket involved with an attempt to define conservatism and his apparent lack of commitment give him a great advantage, and when one considers the kind of book he undertook to write, were doubtless justified. If he had begun his book with a definition of conservatism, he would have committed himself to one particular camp—the libertarians, the traditionalists, the individualists, whatever it may have been—by avoiding this pitfall, he is free to describe them all, to show conservatism, as he says, in all its "fascinating heterogeneity," and this he does, with great thoroughness and skill. Nash has not only succeeded in the difficult task of presenting the position of such men as Richard Weaver, Russell Kirk, Willmoore Kendall, James Burnham, Frank Meyer, William F. Buckley, Jr., among many others, he has shown us how they got there, and in so doing, gives us a clear conception of the vigor, originality and intellectual substance of the conservative movement. If evidence is still needed to refute Lionel Trilling's taunt that American conservatives have no philosophy and express themselves only in "action and irritable mental gestures," George Nash has provided it.

Nash's account, to mention an example, of the influence of Whittaker Chambers (who did not consider himself a conservative) and of Eric Voegelin represents not only clear understanding of what these men are telling us, but of the nature of the crisis of modern man. Voegelin, as Nash puts it,

presented a new interpretation of man's collective existence in terms of "attunement" to the order of being, and he spoke of the crises that occurred when men spurned that order and instead pursued "Gnostic" alternatives that scorned the finite conditions of human life.<sup>4</sup>

He quotes Voegelin's own conclusion of how it might all end:

Totalitarianism, defined as the existential rule of Gnostic activists, is the



end form of progressive civilization.<sup>5</sup>

Chambers arrived, by a very different route, at much the same conclusion. For him, as Nash points out,

the crisis of the twentieth century, of which Communism was both catalyst and symptom, was a crisis of faith. Communism was fundamentally a religion, "man's second oldest faith." . . . Its vision was "the vision of man without God," of "man's mind displacing God as the creative intelligence of the world," of "man's liberated mind, by the sole force of its rational intelligence, re-directing man's destiny. . . ."<sup>6</sup>

My only quarrel with Nash's fine book, if quarrel isn't too strong a word for a slight disagreement about emphasis, is with his conclusion. His account of conservatism as a substantial and generally coherent body of ideas, firmly based on tradition and the sustaining values of civilization, one can only welcome as an important contribution; it is with his conclusion, which, in my opinion, presents far too rosy a picture of the influence of conservatism in practical affairs, that I differ. It is true, as Nash says, that we can point to such publications as *National Review*, *The Alternative*, *Human Events* and *Modern Age*, to such organizations as YAF and ISI, and to such men as William F. Buckley, Jr. and Milton Friedman, but we must face the fact that education, from kindergarten through graduate school; newspapers, radio and television; the mass circulation magazines as well as those of smaller circulation read by the "establishment," to say nothing of book publishing, are all largely controlled by the liberal left. ISI, on a modest budget raised by the most strenuous efforts, with its summer schools, seminars and publications, reaches a few thousand students each year with a point of view based on the en-

during values of civilization, while the schools, colleges and universities, are busily destroying the minds, as Eric Voegelin once put it, of hundreds of thousands, not to say millions, of students. *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* can make such a man as Daniel Ellsberg, who betrayed his trust, into a hero, while those who tried to defend the integrity and security of the nation are made to appear as its enemies. Both *National Review* and *The Alternative* recently published brilliant discussions pointing out the inconsistencies and utter madness of the judicial decisions involving the busing of schoolchildren, but let us not forget that the decisions themselves have the power of government behind them, and were written by law clerks who, in every case, are the outstanding students, the "bright boys," of their respective law schools, as, for that matter, was Alger Hiss.

For all the impressiveness of the conservative movement, for all its intellectual substance, for all the devotion, intelligence and sacrifice of those responsible for it, we must face the fact that, in the words of Albert Jay Nock, we are a remnant. As Russell Kirk put it in a letter in reply to one from me in which I acknowledged the receipt of the manuscript of *The Conservative Mind*:

It may well be that we shall be trampled into the mire, despite all we can do. But Cato conquered. And we shall, in any event, be playing the part which providence designed for us.

<sup>5</sup>George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in the United States Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975), p. 68.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 104.

## *A Philosopher's Garland*

**Viva Vivas!** edited by Henry Regnery,  
*Indianapolis Ind.: Liberty Press, 1976.*  
379 pp. \$7.95.

THE ELEVEN ESSAYS collected here are of generally high quality. Several, such as a highly polished jewel in the form of an open letter to Eliseo Vivas from William Earle, are excellent. So also is the essay by Murray Krieger which comprises the best statement to date of Vivas' aesthetic theory by a man who is obviously very much at home in the sometimes startling twists and turns of Vivas' philosophy of art. Mention should also be made of Russell Kirk's fine essay in which certain parallels between Vivas and T. S. Elliot meet in the "Inner Light" of D. H. Lawrence. In addition, William T. Couch has included an essay of considerable erudition that seeks to undermine the contemporary faith in sensible experience in order to follow Hume (of all people!) who urges us to "cultivate true metaphysics with some care. . . ."

It should be noted that three of the essays in the volume have nothing to do with Vivas in any direct manner, although they are published here by friends and former colleagues to honor him on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. Of these, Professor Erich Heller's essay on Schopenhauer deserves special mention, not only because of the preeminence of the author, but also because of the quality of the essay and the inherent interest of the subject matter. The remaining two essays that do not deal with Vivas' philosophical views were contributed by Robert Browning and Hugh Kenner. In addition, there is an excellent bibliography of Vivas' writings edited by Allan Shields which lists, year by year since 1922, the 101 articles, 135 book reviews, and six books produced by Vivas during his career thus far.

It is unfortunate that none of the essays in the volume deals in detail with *The Moral Life and The Ethical Life*, although

Couch talks about the book and David Levy has an interesting paper in which he attempts to build a political philosophy around Vivas' notion of the ethical life and the primacy of the person. In doing so Professor Levy is forced in the end to abandon the ethical life altogether and to displace a concern for the person with an abstract common good. Vivas' moral philosophy no more permits this sort of experiment than does the Christian ethic (which it resembles in certain important respects), unless we restrict our attention to The City of God or the Kingdom of Ends. To paraphrase Socrates, the public life is no respecter of persons.

An article in the volume by Peter Stanlis is titled "The Aesthetic Theory of Eliseo Vivas" despite the fact that it focuses exclusively on the essays collected in *Creation and Discovery*. It therefore ignores the totality of Vivas' aesthetic theory, which must be viewed within the context of his axiological realism. Indeed, Stanlis' comment that "Vivas assumes that values have no status in Being independently of men" is simply incorrect, as is the claim that Vivas' philosophy is "unsystematic." Despite these flaws, however, the essay provides a fair summary by a man who is obviously very respectful of his subject; and, when taken in conjunction with the excellent essay by Murray Krieger, it provides a good overview of Vivas' aesthetic theory. But to a philosopher the charge that he is "unsystematic" is rather serious, and therefore deserves extended comment. Fortunately, the volume includes Krieger's essay, as well as an essay by Lee Brown, which stresses the systematic character of Vivas' work.

In point of fact, Vivas is always concerned with system—with the question of how the pieces fit together coherently and consistently. This concern never becomes a preoccupation, of course, since above all Vivas is respectful of the matter at hand in order not to do an injustice to the poet and to the sanctity of the work of art. That is why Vivas' insights about art always seem

so penetrating and vivid, so very much to the point and so revelatory of the artist's work. But these insights are certainly not unsystematic. As Lee Brown points out, "one of the prime features of [Vivas'] writings is its systematic character . . . all the questions he takes up he deals with while keeping his eye on the whole fabric. The result is thoroughly systematic." This is not to say that Vivas has a system *per se*. As Earle points out, "I don't believe he has one, wants one, and would do anything but *hoot* at any such thing. Which does not imply that his philosophy is unsystematic in any sense that would make it consist of occasional pieces of this or that, scattered observations, miscellaneous essays."

It would be misleading to suppose that there are no difficulties in attempting to view Vivas' position systematically, however. As Stephen Tonsor points out, "it does seem to me that there are unresolved problems and difficulties with both the ethical and aesthetic theory Eliseo Vivas offers us." In this regard Brown has paid Vivas a high compliment in his essay by wrestling seriously with one of the basic tenets of Vivas' aesthetic theory, in that Brown would displace the claim that the work of art is autonomous, that it "must be viewed with an intensity of involvement—raptness, Vivas calls it." Rather, says Brown, the poem *qua* poem "directs our minds to the world in important ways" in the form, for example, of "philosophically pointed visions."

One could view Kenner's essay as a rejoinder to Brown in behalf of Vivas (which is ironic, since the essay seems to have nothing whatever to do with Vivas). Brown's argument rests upon his contention that "aesthetic perception has intrinsic conceptual components," Kenner, working with a sentence (?) from Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* seems certain that the words evoke "values" that are "intuited faster than rational thought," and that these values are *not* the same as the meaning the words will take on later, after reflection and the process of enculturation occur. Thus the

poet can say "Eins within a space and a wearywide space it wast ere wohned a Mooske . . ." and the line has value before it has meaning in any strict sense. Such is the stuff of art, and the "aesthetic elixir" may seem "evanescent" to Brown, but not to the poet (or to Vivas) who grasps the poem imaginatively rather than conceptually. Indeed, Vivas is most remarkable for being able to find his way so readily in both worlds—the world of the poet and the world of the philosopher—and for reporting back to us in a style that stings but which also celebrates, as William Earle so aptly notes.

The man Eliseo Vivas, "philosopher in spite of himself," according to Stephen Tonsor, deserves the tribute that this volume of essays exemplifies. The volume, in its turn, deserves the serious and respectful attention of a wide audience.

Reviewed by HUGH MERCER CURTLER

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### *The Historical Henry*

**Patrick Henry: A Biography**, by Richard R. Beeman, *New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974. xvii + 229 pp. \$9.95.*

PLUTARCH WOULD NEVER have agreed that the lives of noble men can best be understood simply by analyzing the times in which they lived. And William Wirt, Patrick Henry's earliest biographer, would likewise have denied Richard Beeman's contention that Henry's character can be explained as merely the "product of his very particular situation and experience." Both Plutarch and Wirt wrote as if lives were more than biographies, as if the characters they studied and represented were flesh and blood men whose lives might instruct our own if we should trouble ourselves enough to become familiar with them.

But in the preface to his work, Mr. Beeman announces that "the time has come to wrest Henry from Wirt's grasp," and he is clear about both his aim and his method. His aim is to reduce Henry to the ranks of ordinary men, as he thinks Wirt did not, and his method is to argue time and again that "Henry, more than any of his equally famous contemporaries, was in both his outward manner and mental outlook a product of the narrowly bounded society into which he was born." True to his conception of his rôle as historian, then, Beeman disavows the work of the uncritical Wirt and seeks to form a more disinterested appraisal of Henry's life based on "verifiable facts." Thus Beeman repeatedly interprets Henry's actions in terms of time and place and is led by the logic of his argument to an analysis of late eighteenth-century American history. Consequently the first half of the work frequently snores like the history book it too often resembles. Even though the approach offers something of value in informing the reader of some of Henry's less significant rôles in the Revolution, the results of such a study are scarcely worth the effort and reveal only a little about his character. And the results of Beeman's investigations are not flattering to Henry. Basing his opinion on his analysis of Henry's part in the foundation of the American republic, Beeman concludes that Henry generally lacked "clearly defined principles," and was "short-sighted" and limited by a "misplaced and parochial" prejudice in favor of his home locality.

But the character and wisdom of a man of stature cannot be understood by limiting study to the particular circumstances of his life. A man of insight may form his principles from an encounter with the thought of others or from his own reflections as well as from lived experiences. Thus it may be highly significant that, as William Wirt observed, Patrick Henry resolved at an early age to read Livy's *History of Rome* every year for the rest of his life. His acquaintance with some of the ancient classical au-

thorities, especially Roman historians, might easily have led the young Henry to conclude that a sound popular government rests on the patriotism and virtue of its citizenry. Relevant to this point, Beeman has noted with some emphasis that "[Henry's] concern for the maintenance of virtue in society was one of the few constants in an otherwise erratic political philosophy."

Nevertheless, Mr. Beeman has failed to observe how these principles might have affected Henry's activities in late eighteenth-century American politics. Although Beeman admits that he is surprised at some of Henry's political stands, it should not be surprising that a man of Henry's "'country whig' ideology," or classical republicanism, could consistently support a united America in opposition to English tyranny, and yet later oppose a strong union of the American states out of fear of national tyranny; or oppose a tyrannical English monarchy (or even monarchy on principle), and yet in times of emergency concede the utility of establishing a temporary dictatorship such as republican Rome permitted in times of crisis (nearly always with beneficial results); or could advocate a revolution in America, and yet deplore one in France because he felt that the French people were not sufficiently virtuous to be able to sustain a popular government; or could insist that the people should be the ultimate repository of both power and authority, and yet deny that they should have an immediate and unlimited voice in determining decisions of policy.

Part of Mr. Beeman's trouble is that he does not understand integrity. Committed as he is to understanding Henry in terms of his "particular situation and experience," he cannot explain Henry's actions and political preferences in terms of principle, particularly if the principles are praiseworthy. Thus Beeman suggests that if Henry acts in behalf of his constituents, it is because he is vote-conscious; if he fails to free his slaves despite his marvelous tributes to the glory of liberty, he is guilt-

ridden; and if he sympathizes in the 1790's with his former enemies, the Federalists, it is because he cannot abide being associated with the Republicans and their leader, Jefferson, his bitterest enemy.

Mr. Beeman's limited technique for understanding Henry has also prevented him from recognizing Henry's extraordinary powers of perception. One could not suspect from Beeman's presentation that Henry accurately predicted in the 1790's that the very general (Napoleon) whose victories were then being celebrated in France would soon become that nation's next ruler. Likewise, in this biography Henry's reaction to the Constitution appears to be more obstructionist than prophetic, even though in his speeches against the Constitution Henry often revealed himself to be a man of remarkable insight.

The limitations of Mr. Beeman's work are the limitations of his method, an approach he may have developed under the tutelage of Daniel Boorstin, whose name figures prominently in the acknowledgments. The weaknesses of an intelligent approach to the study of politics sometimes manifest themselves more clearly in the works of students who apply the master's principles of approach indiscriminately to their subjects. Mr. Beeman's method is not objectionable in itself, nor is the work as misguided as this review may make it seem. But he has presented us with the latest attempt to describe Henry as a man "without head or heart" (as Jefferson put it), reducing Henry to the condition of being merely a "product" of his times, an automaton who was activated simply by the controlling impulses of his environment. And in thus robbing Henry of his intellectual and moral vitality, Mr. Beeman has failed to observe that Henry had mind enough to perceive the complexities of his times and heart enough to understand the needs of those who shared an attachment to his place.

Reviewed by J. MICHAEL BORDELON

## *Scourge of Time-servers*

**Enemy Salvoes: Selected Literary Criticism by Wyndham Lewis**, edited by C. J. Fox, general introduction by C. H. Sisson, *London: Vision Press, 1975. 272 pp. £4.95.*

THIS IS A splendid anthology. C. J. Fox, already responsible for editing a book of Lewis' short stories, *Unlucky for Pringle*, for the same publishers, has ranged widely and chosen with unerring skill within the vast expanse of Lewis' critical writings. I have the impression that not very many people now read Wyndham Lewis and that even among those who do know and admire his novels (my own present favorite is the *Revenge for Love*) there are few who return to his nonfictional works. They really don't know what they are missing and Mr. Fox has given them an easy way of finding out. You don't have to agree with Lewis' critical judgments to get pleasure from this volume. I happen to admire G. K. Chesterton and have little time for Gertrude Stein. Lewis was a fan of neither. Hear him first on the prose-song of Gertrude Stein:

We can represent it as a cold suet-roll of fabulously reptilian length. Cut it at any point, it is the same thing: the same heavy, sticky opaque mass all through, and all along. It is weighted, projected, with a sybilline urge. It is mournful and monstrous, composed of dead and inanimate material. It is all fat without nerve. Or the evident vitality that informs it is vegetable rather than animal. Its life is a low-grade, if tenacious one; of the sausage-by-the-yard variety.

All this splendid invective is livened by telling epigrams: Miss Stein, says Lewis, may be described as "the reverse of Patience sitting on a monument—she appears, that is, as a Monument sitting on patience."

But Lewis' criticism of Gertrude Stein has a serious purpose—like all his criti-

cism. Lewis was a committed critic but, as he never tired of pointing out, his commitment was to no party or church. His lifelong devotion was to the intelligence and to its preservation against the pressures brought to bear upon it in a mass-politicized era. Gertrude Stein was the villainess of his piece both in her own writings and in her influence on Hemingway, whom Lewis much admired. Her "gargantuan mental stutter" was taken up by the "various stammering, squinting, punning group who followed her" and it became one of the main weapons in "the war against the conceptual stronghold of the intellect." Thus were the "monstrous, desperate, soggy *lengths* of primitive mass-life chopped off and presented to us as a never ending prose-song" and were "undoubtedly intended as an epic contribution to the present mass-democracy."

The anti-intellectual, plain-man-knows-best, approach was at the heart of what Lewis disliked in Chesterton. Again there are the neat characterizing jibes—*e.g.* Chesterton described as a "dogmatic Toby-jug"—but also a perceptive analysis of the constituent elements of the Chestertonian image which the great man's admirers would do well to consider. Chesterton, in Lewis' view, represented a liberalism

complicated with a romantic conversion to Roman Catholicism, and installed in an obsessing and cartoon-like John Bull physique. . . . The well-fed high spirits of the old liberal England, the strange association of humaneness with religious intolerance, a sanguine grin fiercely painted on the whole make-up, compose a sinister figure such as you would find, perhaps—exploiting its fatness, its shrewdness, its animal violence, its blustering patriotism all at once—in the center of some nightmare Bank Holiday fair.

Lewis' war against the cult of the plain man, like his battle against the "Black-is-necessarily-better-than-White" attitude exemplified in racial terms by Sherwood

Anderson and in moral terms by the writers associated with Jolas' quarterly *Transition* was the fruit of his realization of the fragility of civilization. As C. H. Sisson says in his perceptive introduction:

What made Lewis' criticism uncanny and aroused so much hostility was the fact that, as a great artist, he was naturally not less but more aware than many of his opponents of the unplumbed depths of things and for that reason was the more determined that the little hard-won gains of civilization in making a tiny order here and there on the surface should not be filched away, leaving the whole historical task to be done again or perhaps for a considerable future not done at all.

For the irony is that Wyndham Lewis, the self-described Enemy, the conservative critic who did not shy away from battle even with those he most admired, was concerned above all with assuring for his own time and the future the conditions under which the artist would be free of such distractions from his proper business of creative work. Propaganda, the regimentation of polemic for nonartistic purposes was anathema to Lewis, but of course the very fact that he felt called upon to attack the propagandistic exercises of the regiments of Leftist writers was enough to get him classified in the popular mind as a propagandist for the other side. "The politicization of art," he wrote, "is a human catastrophe of the same order as the politicization of science."

Lewis had no patience with the terrible simplifiers of the modern world. He took up his pen against Siegfried Sasson and many other writers about the war of 1914-18, not to defend the senior officers fiercely derided in their works but because "the role of these quite unimportant people is grossly misrepresented in these lyrical diatribes, and the true complexion of both the War and the peace that has followed it, risks to be obscured." The writers he admired most, Matthew Arnold and Flau-

bert for instance, were the enemies of such simplifying currents which wash up human guilt on chosen scapegoat islands in the flow of man's history.

Wyndham Lewis was, as Henry Regnery has described in *Modern Age*, a friend of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. But his admiration for these two men, as for Joyce and Hemingway, never stopped him from criticizing their work where he felt it was due. Eliot's extinction of personality doctrine came under Lewis' fire, while Pound, "a true, disinterested and unspoilt individual" of unerring taste as an interpreter of Propertius and Arnaut Daniel, is sternly dismissed as any sort of guide to the present. I cannot resist quoting Lewis' description of Pound's mind as a mixture in equal proportions of "Bergson-Marinetti-Mr. Hueffer (with a few Preraphaelite 'christian names' thrown in) Edward Fitzgerald and Buffalo Bill." But naturally that playful, if perceptive, recipe can give one no more than a taste of the extremely interesting ten pages on Pound which Mr. Fox has included in his anthology.

In addition to the writers already mentioned you will find Shakespeare, Shaw, Virginia Woolf, Orwell and D. H. Lawrence treated here. William Faulkner joins Stein, Anderson, Hemingway, and Pound among the Americans considered, and the French writers discussed include Peguy, Malraux, Sartre and Camus. Many other figures, great and small, make brief or fleeting appearances of this excellent selection that has put us in the debt of Mr. C. J. Fox and the Vision Press.

Reviewed by DAVID LEVY.

## *The Doctor Angelicus*

**Friar Thomas d'Aquino**, by James A. Weisheipl, O. P., *Garden City, N. Y.:* Doubleday and Company, 1974. 464 pp. \$8.95.

THE LIFE OF St. Thomas Aquinas spans the middle fifty years of the thirteenth century, 1224-1274. Thomas was, as G. K. Chesterton tells us, a huge and heavy man and—in that respect at least—much like Chesterton himself. He was slow and quiet, very mild and generous, and—quite unlike Chesterton—not very sociable, indeed extremely shy.

Father James Weisheipl's *Friar Thomas d'Aquino* is primarily concerned with Thomas' contributions to the life of the mind. Thomas, he writes, was not only a saint; he also was "a reasonable man, a man who makes sense." According to Father Weisheipl, Thomas believed that human beings are reasonable, that they are capable of being persuaded by argument and evidence. Thomas, he contends, reconciled reason and faith, and insisted that the senses are the windows of the soul, and that it was the duty of the Faith to digest the toughest and most practical of the pagan philosophies.

St. Thomas devoted his life and work to formulating answers to questions of enduring interest and importance: Is there a Supreme Being? How do we know that He exists? What impels men to enter society? Is society natural or artificial? In developing answers to these and other questions, Thomas displayed an erudition, a linguistic precision, a razor-like logic, and an intellectual integrity that would put all too many modern thinkers to shame.

The problem of God and his reality revealed diverse and often thought-provoking approaches to the attempt to prove the reality of God. The Angelic Doctor distinguished between the *a priori* and *a posteriori* approaches. *A priori* arguments for the reality of God are arguments inde-

pendent of sense experience. One argued to the reality of God on the basis of a set of *a priori* assumptions regarding God. St. Anslem, for instance, believed that one could prove the existence of God through the ontological approach, which is based on a set of *a priori* assumptions. St. Anslem assumed that God is a perfect being, that none other could be more perfect than he. But how could this being (God) be perfect, he argued, unless it indeed has existence? Therefore, God must exist or else he would not be perfect.

For the man of faith St. Anslem's argument for God's existence has a certain attractiveness and persuasiveness; a man of faith will be satisfied with St. Anslem's argument, because he believes in Revelation, and because he shares St. Anslem's assumptions. But St. Thomas disagreed with St. Anslem's argument, for he recognized that the latter was making an improper transit from the epistemological (conceptual) order to the ontological (real) order. True, St. Anslem had succeeded in proving God's existence in the epistemological order, but he had failed to demonstrate that God existed in extra-mental reality, that he existed outside of our minds. To be sure, the believer would find St. Anslem's arguments acceptable, but a "leap of faith" would be required for him to accept the argument.

According to St. Thomas, the best approach is *a posteriori*, that is, the argument from experience. In this approach Thomas argued from common experience to the existence of God not merely in the realm of ideas, but also in the real world. For example, Thomas argued from the fact of efficient causality in the world. Nothing can be the cause of itself, Thomas contended, for then it would have to exist before itself. But we cannot proceed *ad infinitum* in the search for causes that are themselves caused, for there would be no "first cause" and consequently no causality in the universe. Therefore, beyond the whole collection of efficient causes that are themselves caused, there must be a first cause

uncaused, upon whom all others depend. That uncaused cause, wrote St. Thomas, is what human beings call God.

There also is Thomas' argument that in the universe natural bodies that lack intelligence nevertheless act intelligently for a purpose. This is clear because they always or normally act in the same way so as to achieve the best end; therefore, it cannot be by chance; rather, it must be by purpose. But things lacking intelligence cannot act for a purpose, or tend to a goal, unless they are directed by some intelligence, even as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore, there is some intelligence by whom all natural things are ordered to an end. That intelligence is God.

Unlike St. Anslem's ontological argument, Thomas' arguments (there are in all five arguments) for the reality of God do not require a "leap of faith." For Thomas' arguments are based upon what we observe in common experience and our reflection upon common experience. Reflection upon common experience also led St. Thomas to the conclusion that man is by nature social, a position which had previously been articulated by Aristotle. Thomas believed that the testimony for man's natural sociality is everywhere around us: For example, man abhors solitude and craves friendship; there is a spontaneous desire within man to seek others out and enjoy their friendship; man cannot care for himself alone; a child, for instance, has to be reared by his parents for several years; even in adult life a solitary man can rarely provide himself with the bare means of subsistence, let alone the goods demanded for a decent life appropriate to a human being. Man's gift of language and ability to comprehend and utilize concepts and symbols fit man to communicate with other human beings; unless man was meant to be in society, the faculty of speech and the capacity to conceptualize and understand and utilize symbols would be given to him for no purpose. And, moreover, man's rational and moral development demand constant communication of ideas with other



human beings, an exchange possible only in society.

For Thomas, then, society is natural; it emanates from the demands of man's nature. Man has natural inclinations toward social life; human beings need one another; they enter society to share friendship, love, knowledge, marriage and family life, and the pursuit of the common good.

In one of the first biographies ever written about St. Thomas, William de Tocca wrote that the Angelic Doctor was not only a scholar of the first rank, but also a good and holy man who provided an example worthy of emulation by posterity. A modern-day commentator on the life and work of St. Thomas, Pope Pius XI, echoed the sentiments expressed by William de Tocca when he said that Thomas is "the saintliest of the learned and the most learned of the saintliest."

Is St. Thomas relevant to our times? Is he an antidote to the spiritual and intellectual bankruptcy that permeates our times? "The Saint," wrote G.K. Chesterton in his biography of Thomas,

is a medicine because he is an antidote. Indeed that is why the saint is often a martyr; he is mistaken for a poison because he is an antidote . . . (E)ach generation seeks its saint by instinct; and he is not what people want, but rather what people need.

Do we need St. Thomas today? Clearly, we do; for we need St. Thomas' wisdom and intellectual integrity, and because his arguments about man's freedom, man and society, and the reality of God remain valid. But one must wonder if the real problem is not so much that human beings today do not know of God's reality and his goodness as it is that all too many already know of God's reality and his love, but nonetheless worship other gods before him. If this is the case, and it seems fair to say that it is, then perhaps we need St. Thomas even more today for his saintliness.

Reviewed by HAVEN BRADFORD GOW

## *Thomas Wolfe and His Clan*

**Look Behind You, Thomas Wolfe.**  
**Ghosts of a Common Tribal Heritage,** by Elaine Westall Gould, *New York: Exposition Press, 1976. 157 pp.*  
\$7.00.

FOR TWO REASONS this is not a book I should ordinarily consider reviewing. In the first place the author is my late mother's friend, someone I have known since childhood, and I have always felt that friendship and criticism do not mix. Secondly, it is published by a vanity press, and that is the kiss of death as far as reviewing goes. However, I have undertaken to write about Mrs. Gould's book because I consider it significant enough to overcome any personal scruples. *Look Behind You, Thomas Wolfe*, should have been published by a regular trade publisher, at the very least by Wolfe's old publisher Harpers'. Why the various publishers declined is that Mrs. Gould is in her ninetieth year. The editor at Harper & Row told her that ten years ago his firm would have snapped up her manuscript, and added that "it has charm, insight and that special quality that your own personal knowledge brought to the material." Roger Straus of Farrar, Straus & Geroux thought the book was "elegant and stylish and does add to the knowledge of your distinguished cousin." Elizabeth Nowell, editor of Wolfe's letters, considered it "the best expression of an understanding of Tom and what he was doing that I have ever read." And so on. But fine words oil no presses. As Mrs. Gould explained to me, she wanted to make her unique knowledge and understanding of her cousin part of the written record before she died, not out of vanity, but because she considered it desperately important. So she spent between five and six thousand dollars of her savings that her book might at last appear in the rather sleazy Exposition format.

Almost half a century ago, when I was

still in high school, Mrs. Gould came to tea one Sunday afternoon bringing a book that she said had been written by her cousin. In those days I couldn't imagine the cousin of anyone I knew writing a book. Authors I thought of as remote almost sacerdotal persons. The book, *Look Homeward, Angel*, lay on our living room table unread for some months. I don't know when I first picked it up, but when in an idle moment I did I was to my astonishment carried away. To me, a schoolboy in a Boston suburb, it was a revelation, the very warp and woof of America that I was just beginning to sense. I read it uncritically, gulping it down at one sitting that lasted into early morning hours, swept along by the breath of life that blew with such force through its pages. For my unformed self it was a book that went beyond literature to touch the very roots of human experience.

I have not picked it up since that long day, and I do not know how I should find it now. A few years ago I happened to run into Howard Mumford Jones in the Harvard Yard when he for some purpose of his own was re-reading *Look Homeward, Angel*. He said it was uphill work. I do not know. However I have recently been reading, and for the first time, Wolfe's two posthumous novels, *The Web and the Rock* and *You Can't Go Home Again*. Wolfe obviously reads very differently now than he did in the twenties and thirties. The piled-up adjectives, the weighted paragraphs, the unappetizing descriptions of food, the exaggerations of physiognomies and twists of speech, the relentless bulk, are all too apparent. He has had the further misfortune of being embalmed in the reading lists of college courses in American literature. Yet as I read him again after so many years he seemed so aboundingly alive that I could not keep back my astonishment at his having been dead for over a third of a century. Whatever his flaws he remains a colossal figure. That was clear to me. No other American author since his death has given us such a sense of the living moment and of the American earth.

For his cousin Elaine Westall Gould, Thomas Wolfe is the culmination of an extraordinary tribe, the Westalls, her father's and his mother's family whom he recreated fictionally as Pentlands and Joyners. Without an understanding of the Westall inheritance, Mrs. Gould insists, there is no understanding of Tom. His patronymic was a mere accretion. His sister Mabel once declared he hadn't a drop of Wolfe blood in him. He was all Westall, a tribe of mountaineers descended tentatively to the lowlands, set apart, larger than life in body as in mind, possessed by a streak of madness, preachers of the word. "The tribe," Mrs. Gould writes, "was drunk with words, all of them. They believed as many ancient people did, in the power of words—that a word, once spoken, had a life of its own, to protect or destroy, even to create."

As a little girl Mrs. Gould spent three years in Asheville, stayed in her aunt's bleak boarding house some six years before Tom was born, sharing the life of that singular tribe of which she was a part and which she came to know more critically if less exuberantly than did her cousin. Although Tom wrote a merciless caricature of Mrs. Gould's father in his portrait of Uncle Bascom, his cousin feels that the failed preacher-uncle with the gift of words and the word-intoxicated nephew were cut from the same basic pattern, both driven by the force of their enormous creative powers. She could overlook Tom's libel of her father, but the malicious portrait of her mother as Aunt Louise she never wholly forgave. Tom disliked and resented his aunt, partly because she was culturally superior to him, partly because she refused to recognize the genius of his unachieved self, and finally because he hated to face the fact that it was she who had persuaded his niggardly mother to finance his graduate studies at Harvard. With the failure of Uncle Bascom in mind, Mrs. Gould believes that Tom too might have ended in failure of an even more sodden sort. "If success and recognition had not come to him he could, I think, have easily turned to alcohol

as a solace." She has a touching paragraph on Tom as she first caught sight of him after he had come north to study at Harvard:

Along about one o'clock I happened to be at the window and saw him come swinging across the field, pockets stuffed with books, his colt's legs scissoring the tall grass. . . . You'd have known he was used to climbing mountains. And he was talking to himself as my father always did when he got out in the open, making faces and flailing the air with his long arms. He was talking when he burst into the house.

Thomas Wolfe considered that his singular environment had shaped him. Mrs. Gould in her illuminating study defines him through his singular inheritance. Her writing is more muted than her cousin's, but the Westall gift of words is there. I hope that, in spite of the Exposition label, *Look Behind You, Thomas Wolfe* will be lastingly read.

Reviewed by FRANCIS RUSSELL

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### *Serene and Enduring Jane*

*Jane Austen Today*, edited by Joel Weinsheimer, Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1975. viii + 178 pp. \$10.00.

Jane? [said Humberstall] Why, she was a little old maid 'ood written 'alf a dozen books about a hundred years ago. 'Twasn't as if there was anything to 'em either. I know. I had to read 'em. They weren't adventurous, nor smutty, nor what you'd call even interestin'—all about girls o' seventeen . . . not certain 'oom they'd like to marry. . . .

—Rudyard Kipling, "The Janeites."

LAST YEAR, 1975, was also a bicentennial: not, to be sure, so significant in the scheme of things as the anniversary of a great power, nor one very apt to arouse the ardor of the average American, whose knowledge of Jane Austen is doubtless considerably inferior to that of Kipling's cockney soldier. Even scholars, two centuries after her birth, have been unable to determine the worth of Austen, discomfited, even as fat old Humberstall, by the alleged limitations and exility of her art. Nor is it the narrowness only that has baffled them. She has been dismissed as a mere miniaturist, censored as frigid (first by Charlotte Brontë), depreciated as a novelist of manners and hence superficial, calumniated as a snobbish reflector of class bias, and derided as a stolid adherent of conventionality. At her nadir, she has been conceived as a spinster Dr. Johnson, contaminated by the same prejudices but devoid of his appealing idiosyncrasies, his invigorating belligerence, his passion. Recently, in an effort to rehabilitate her for the twentieth century, she has been put forth as a radical, gently and with deadpan irony subversive of her age.

These caricatures, of course, have not gone unchallenged, and the present collection of essays makes admirable headway against them. The eight contributors, though bonafide Austen scholars, are neither Janeites nor pedants; that is to say, the pieces are not exercises in preciousness and obsecration on the one hand, nor on the other are they tiresome lucubrations about, say, the number and nature of the kisses exchanged in the novels (Lionel Stevenson—there are sixteen of them by the way), or the regularity with which the language of the counting house appears (Mark Schorer, Dorothy Van Ghent). They are ably written, conscientious disquisitions on matters of general import, and may be recommended, not only to the pedagogue and scholar, but to the lay reader of Austen who has also an appreciation of clear and unpretentious literary criticism.

The first of the essays—Alistair M. Duckworth's "Prospects and Retrospects"

—confronts manfully the contention of much twentieth-century criticism that truly great art is susceptible of an infinite number of interpretations. Significant literature, so this ideology claims, is not like a nut or fruit, to be cracked that the kernel of truth may emerge, but is instead like an onion “whose body contains, finally, no heart, no kernel, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing except the infinity of its own envelopes—which envelop nothing other than the unity of its own surfaces” (Roland Barthes). The god-terms of such criticism are ambiguity and openness, and it is an aesthetic superbly suited to most modern art, where values are at best subjective, where elusiveness is everything, and where the stress is upon the feeling, the attitude, not the abstract idea. But classical literature—and in the casual sense of that epithet most literature before 1800 is so—proceeded from societies in which there obtained a true, intellectual consensus. Such literature is apt, in part, to reflect that consensus, and therefore, though it is often complex and sophisticated, it embodies that much detested kernel. The school of Barthes is at least candid enough to recognize this, yet in its dogmatism it depreciates such works as insufficiently polysemous. For Barthes the adjective *classic* is invariably pejorative: it signifies that literature which limits meaning, which is closed. Jane Austen, despite her complexity and irony, is in Barthes’ sense closed. The contributors to the present volume (especially Duckworth, Wiesenfarth, and Donovan) seem generally agreed that in Austen there prevails an external moral order, both traditional and Christian, which is distinctly opposed to romanticism and agnostic rationalism. (This view has received additional support from Marilyn Butler’s recent fine study, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*.)

For those not shackled by Barthes’ ideology, Austen’s limitations may seem alluring and, in a world now surfeited with existentialism, particularly valuable. Most of these essays are in fact devoted to vindicating her various “limitations” (e.g., Kroe-

ber, McMaster, Greene), and to demonstrating that she was not so ignorant of the world, politics, the incipient romantic age, as is sometimes alleged (Wiesenfarth, Page, Donovan). Donald Greene’s “Myth of Limitation” is perhaps the most incisive and entertaining, for he has always had an aptitude for iconoclasm. Austen has a trick of bringing out the inane in her scholars, a circumstance which offers Greene many opportunities to exercise his sardonic and sometimes brutal commonsense. His pungent prose and firm knowledge of Austen enable him to make short shrift of those who meander on about her class bias, emotionlessness, limited scope, *ad nauseam*, and he elucidates very well the essentially dramatic nature of her art. He shows too that all those passages from her correspondence which scholars have fastened on so solemnly as self-deprecations (e.g., that notorious reference to “the little bit [two inches wide] of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush”) are in fact the remarks of a woman confident of her art and contrasting it ironically with those novelists more pretentious but, as she foresaw, finally trivial.

Of the eight, the only devil’s advocate is the editor, Joel Weinsheimer, whose deposition, “Jane Austen’s Anthropocentrism,” gives the old limitations charge a new twist. There *is* something missing from her work, he contends. She focusses so exclusively on man that she fails “to conceptualize him in a sphere of reference larger than himself.” There are no impersonal ideas in her novels: pride is stigmatized, to be sure, but it is never denominated sinful or evil. Christianity, though it may provide the intellectual background of the novels, is never really active, never an agent. Man is studied in a vacuum and only in his relationships with others. Thus, Weinsheimer decides, Austen is, *au fond*, a novelist of manners, a miniaturist. Weinsheimer’s and Greene’s essays conclude the volume, so coupled, no doubt, to show that the scholarly dilemma over Austen is unresolved. Greene urges persuasively that there is much more to her than meets the eye, and

he jocosely contrasts her work with the cumbrous and two-dimensional "epics" of James Michener. To evaluate a novel by its profusion of characters or the amplitude of its social, temporal, or geographical range, is surely naive. Yet Weinsheimer raises important points, and suggests why it is that so few critics feel secure in putting her with a Chaucer, a Shakespeare, a Dostoevski, or a Dickens.

Still, most writers will not stand comparison with those mentioned above, yet we do not harp so on *their* limitations. Perhaps that is because their limitations, unlike Austen's, are so patently injurious that to remark them would be jejune. To one emancipated from romantic biases toward emotionalism (C. Brontë) and modernist obsessions with ambiguity (Barthes) her work requires no extenuation. "Nothing is too little for so little a creature as man," said Dr. Johnson. Self-knowledge, self-restraint, modesty, integrity, the importance of affection and charity—these are values central to Austen. That her characters exercise these virtues in a narrow sphere is true, as it is true for most of us in life. Yet who will say that these virtues are themselves narrow? And in what way is her art gravely limited who is able to exhibit them so forcibly? They will both outlast several bicentenaries.

Reviewed by R. D. STOCK

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### *Latin and its Progeny*

#### **The Story of Latin and the Romance**

Languages, by Mario Pei, *New York: Harper & Row, 1976. 356 pp. \$15.95.*

MARIO PEI, professor emeritus of Romance languages at Columbia University, who is well known for popular introductions to linguistics and to a variety of languages as well as for works of a more technical char-

acter, has here produced a book which is remarkable not only for its readability but even more for the great amount of both essential and peripheral information in it. The book was written with the collaboration of Professor Paul Gaeng, of the University of Cincinnati, who in fact wrote the short account of the transformational-generative school contained within the chapter on the history of Romance philology and linguistics.

There are accounts of the spread of Roman power and the spread of the Latin language, which was a direct consequence of it; of long extinct languages of ancient Italy like Etruscan and Oscan, the latter of which at least left some marks on present-day Italian; on the first appearances of what came to be called the Romance languages and on their internal development and external spread; even on their colonial and creolized forms; and much more. The numerous appendices include selections of specimen texts with translations and short notes calling attention to their more notable linguistic features, and practically every one of the Romance languages is illustrated in this way: Provençal and Catalan, Rumanian and the extinct Vegliote of the Dalmatian coast, two of the three varieties of Rheto-Rumansh, the Campidanese and Logudorese dialects of Sardinian with their archaic survival of Latin features generally lost elsewhere, as well as texts in early Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. The four short extracts from the *Chanson de Roland* in Appendix H are provided with a summary of the story. Some specimen texts are also given in the main body of the work, in the chapter entitled "The Dawn of the Romance Languages," one purpose of which is to identify texts which can no longer be called Vulgar Latin but must be classified as Romance: for French the Strasbourg Oaths from the ninth century, for Italian and Spanish certain texts of the tenth century.

In arguing (p. 54) against the notion that the Latin spoken by the masses was radically different from literary Latin Pro-

fessor Pei has a very cogent argument in the fact that Cicero's speeches had to be understood not only by senators but by popular assemblies as well. He does, however, suggest the possibility that popular Latin was characterized by a stress accent, not a pitch accent: this stress accent was the cause of the vowel syncope and vowel weakening of early Latin and of the changes of vowel quality and loss of distinction of vowel quantity in late popular Latin, for it had never been fully obliterated by the system of accentuation by musical pitch which had been cultivated by the upper classes during the classical period of Latin literature. Here, without taking a very firm stand and without citing modern authorities, he is very close to the theory of Frank Frost Abbott and Roland Kent on the influence of Greek tutors in introducing musical accentuation among the Roman educated classes. On the pronunciation of classical Latin in more general terms he presents the chief arguments in favor of what we have come to call the "Roman pronunciation" (Cicero, etc., with *c* hard even before *i* and *e*; *vinum* with the *v* pronounced as in *wine*, not as in *vine*). The favor sometimes shown for the alternate or "Italian" pronunciation really rests mainly on sentimental grounds, and Professor Pei has performed a useful service if, through a book which should have a wide reading public, he has helped to discourage it.

There are a few points on which the reviewer may disagree with the author. Page 60 contains a list of some Latin words borrowed from Greek, and the number would indeed be high if we went through the dictionary or examined the works of many late writers, but we must not overlook the strong purist tradition which prevailed in much of the classical literature, not only in Caesar and Cicero but in the poets as well. Lucretius, in whose Epicurean system of physics the atom has a place of paramount

importance, never uses the Greek-derived word *atomus* but always a native Latin substitute for it, and Vergil, though his gods resemble the gods of Homer, regularly gives them their Latin names. Factual errors and misprints are few and mostly trivial, though attention might be called to a few. The Praenestine Fibula, mentioned on page 45 as the object bearing the earliest Latin inscription on record, is not a belt-buckle but a brooch. To Greek and Sanskrit, mentioned on page 57 as the only Indo-European languages which in the matter of historical records antedate Latin, it is necessary to add Hittite, now well documented through records from the late second millennium B. C., and perhaps also Avestan, unless one should object that the records antedating Latin are rather scanty, or that their content is not historical in character.

It is not to be expected that a book which treats the history of so large and important a group of languages as the Romance group, along with its parent Latin, within the compass of less than 400 pages would give an account of all their sound-changes in full detail, and yet a number of the most important ones are pointed out, including for example (in Appendix E) the changes which produced Italian *chiamare* from Latin *clamare*, Spanish *hacer* from *facere*, French *chef* from *caput*, and many others. Technical terms are moderately frequent, but there is a 23-page glossary of them. If some of the more formidable terms, like *morphophonemic* and *prosodeme*, are not included, it is because they are not used in the text itself. Pei always makes the meaning of his argument clear. Any educated reader with some concern for languages is certain to find himself interested while reading the book and better informed for having done so.

Reviewed by JAMES W. POULTNEY

## Romania's "Liberal" Mask

**Contemporary Romania: Her Place in World Affairs**, by Ion Ratiu, *Richmond, England: The Foreign Affairs Publishing Co., Ltd., 1975. 138 pp. \$8.00.*

THE HOPEFUL WESTERNER, expecting the Soviet satellites eventually to sever their colonial noose and "liberalize," if only by defying the Kremlin, must have followed with interest the apparently independent stand Romania has taken in recent years. Ion Ratiu's *Contemporary Romania*, however, lays to rest the myth of Romania as "maverick" by exposing the underlying pro-Soviet nature of its recent maneuvers. In this concise, readable essay, Ratiu, a Romanian exile since 1940, has sketched the history of Romanian Communist rule from the war to the present. Although the book reads a bit like a mystery tale as Romania's delicate and complicated relationship with Russia unfolds, the *dénouement* is entirely predictable.

The intrigue began in the late fifties as a result of Romanian President Gheorghiu-Dej's belief that his country had to industrialize, that an economy based on heavy industry was essential to the creation of a proletariat—the source of leaders for a Communist state. (No matter that these undertakings cost the people dearly—rationing, shortages, grave housing problems; ideology came first.) Khrushchev disagreed; he wanted Romania, as part of COMECON, the plan of economic interdependence within the Communist block, to remain agricultural. Gheorghiu-Dej, not wishing to defy the Soviet Union (which had, after all, put him in power), nevertheless felt he had to resist. He therefore decided to appeal to the West, and in 1964, in order to lure Western capital, stopped the jamming of foreign radio broadcasts, allowed the performance of some Western plays, and even released some political pris-

oners (many of whom had been jailed for more than seventeen years). The West, convinced that Romania was now a thorn in Russia's side, responded with cash.

This "liberalization" ended soon after the death of Gheorghiu-Dej, however, with the arrival in 1965 of the megalomaniac Ceausescu, whose ruthlessness did not fail to appeal to the Russians. (In 1971 for example, he introduced his own mini-cultural revolution which intensified Communist propaganda and repression of religion, raised the number of "volunteers" [read: forced laborers], eliminated from broadcasts and publications "everything displaying ideas and principles alien to Communist philosophy and ethics," to mention but the highlights.) It is Ratiu's thesis that the Soviet Union gradually came to realize the advantages of using Western capital to build Communism; rather than oppose Romania's new turn, then, it came to encourage it. In the face of this new attitude, Romania proved to be a good Soviet ally: as of 1970 it has agreed to take full part in COMECON, it joined the Red Army for military maneuvers in 1972, and Ceausescu faithfully cites Soviet documents in many of his speeches. Indeed, the Soviets have come to appreciate the advantages of letting Romania occasionally play the rebel. For consider the results: in 1971 Romania confidentially sold items to Russia that the United States had embargoed from export to the Soviet Union, though not to Romania; as "independent" (though militant) spokesman for Communism, Romania facilitates the expansion of the Soviet empire to African and South American countries; and Romanian agents, working in cooperation with the KGB, were exposed in Brussels and Paris in 1969, and in West Germany in 1971. In the meantime, Western money and cooperation has not stopped—*détente* continues as scheduled.

Ratiu's clear, informative analysis of the political climate is followed by a description of the poverty and fear characteristic of Romanian life under Communism. But if this is in many ways the more important

part of the story it is also the weakest part of the book. The ubiquitous terror, the unprecedented injustices, are not adequately conveyed to the reader who is not already aware of them. Ratiu is evidently an outsider—however sympathetic—who never lived through the systematic slaughter of a culture, that insult to morality that is Communism. A book dealing with Romanian life after 1945 should leave the reader trembling with indignation; Ratiu's essay, informative though it is, barely stirs the passions to discomfort.

The last chapter deals with the author's personal assessment of the situation. Given the pain and sacrifice to which the great majority has been subjected in Romania, as well as the prevalent repression and hypocrisy of the new régime, the people are not likely to embrace Communism. The relatively large number of present Party members can be explained not so much by the success of philosophical persuasions as by the lure of material advantages available to card-carrying Communists. The lack of spirit in no way spells relief, however, especially since relations with the Soviet Union are stronger than ever, thanks to the Party leadership. Ratiu's optimism is thus qualified:

If change is to be brought about in Romania, it will be the doing of the ruling élite themselves when their will to govern collapses, or by the country's youth. Both are possible. Both are probable, should the international equation of forces permit it.

But at the moment the ruling élite seems quite content, a large number of young people have fled the country (whether legally or illegally), and as for the international equation . . . there are fewer and fewer unknowns, the West being less and less willing to do its own arithmetic.

Reviewed by JULIANA GERAN PILON

## *A Far Eastern Ambuscade*

**Ambush at Vladivostok**, by Phyllis Schlafly and Chester Ward, *Alton, Illinois: Pere Marquette Press, 1976. 157 pp. \$2.00 (paper).*

GERALD FORD was ambushed at Vladivostok. This, at least, is the conclusion of Phyllis Schlafly and Chester Ward, who argue in their latest book that the 1974 SALT II accords marked yet another dismal passage in the history of American strategic emasculation. "Ambush" is indeed a reasonable choice of terms for, as the authors demonstrate, the President was taken by surprise and out-manuevered in the fast-paced talks which constituted the treaty conference. Ford arrived at Vladivostok completely unaware that he would negotiate any such treaty. He was totally unprepared, psychologically, because of a grueling 17,000 mile goodwill trip which prefaced the conference and technically, because of the virtual absence of any American military or foreign policy advisers. Only Henry Kissinger was at hand, and he, of course, was only too happy to advise and to guide the inexperienced President in terms of his own highly dubious perspective on world affairs. Brezhnev and company, with the able assistance of a coterie of military experts, were ready to capitalize on what for them was an opportune situation and, as Ford himself later put it, the "get-acquainted phase" was swiftly transcended and replaced with "very intensive negotiations on the primary issue of limitation of strategic arms."

According to Schlafly and Ward, Kissinger is to be held principally responsible for the Vladivostok debacle; he knew about the nature of the conference beforehand, and he consciously led Ford into the ambush. SALT II, the authors insist was but another manifestation of the Secretary's "sick" and "defeatist" foreign policy through which he has "deliberately brought the United States down from a position of overwhelm-



ing power to the brink of strategic surrender." As key evidence for this controversial contention, the authors cite a statement which Kissinger supposedly made to Admiral Zumwalt—"The day of the United States is past and today is the day of the Soviet Union. My job as Secretary of State is to negotiate the most acceptable second best position available"—a statement which Kissinger denies that he ever made. In their attempt to impute next to treasonous actions to the Secretary, the authors go to great lengths to prove that the statement was made and cite speculative psychological evidence to suggest its probability. Yet, as far as this reviewer can discern, their case remains unfortunately problematic, for they fail to provide specific motivations on Kissinger's part under which his policies can be construed as acts of "deliberate surrender" rather than as simple (perhaps egregious) errors in judgment. Nevertheless, it is quite easy to agree with Schlafly and Ward that Kissinger's actions, the pessimism underlying his foreign policy and his passion for "preemptive concessions," attest to qualities which make him eminently unqualified for the management of American strategic diplomacy.

The controversy over Kissinger's intentions notwithstanding, SALT II is surely a prime example of the confusion currently beclouding American foreign policy. When Kissinger and Ford returned from Vladivostok, they assured the American people that "essential equivalence" in strategic arms had been maintained, and the President confidently stated that "at Vladivostok we put a firm ceiling on the strategic arms race." According to Schlafly and Ward, Ford could make such an astonishing statement because he sincerely, albeit naïvely, believed that SALT II limited the number of MIRV warheads allowed to both sides. As the authors are quick to demur, the agreement actually limited only the number of missiles on which MIRVs could be

mounted. Under the agreement Ford thought he signed, the Soviets would have been allowed to MIRV only 165 of their missiles, whereas under the *real* agreement, they were guaranteed 1320 missiles with multiple warheads. Yet, and this is the irony of Ford's quest for "equality," even if MIRVs had been limited, the Soviet's overwhelming superiority in terms of nuclear throw weight (app. 3 megatons per Soviet SS-18 vs. app. 170 kilotons per U.S. Minuteman III) would have given them 3960 megatons of explosive power to counter a puny American assault of 222.4 megatons.

These are *prima facie* staggering figures, but what do they really mean? According to Schlafly and Ward, they imply that the U.S. is at "the brink of strategic surrender," that we would be powerless to counter any possible Soviet initiative. One wonders, however, whether American strategic capability has been as thoroughly weakened as the authors appear to believe. Wars may be fought partly in terms of throw weight and megatonnage, but not solely in those terms. There are other factors involved—weapons technology, missile accuracy and kill ratios, missile and deployment obsolescence, geographical distribution of weapons—and until these are considered in concert, it is quite difficult to determine who would win the next war, were such a confrontation to arise.

This is not to say that the central thrust of Schlafly's and Ward's account is in any way misconceived. To the contrary, their book is important and valuable because it exposes the current American policy trend—its concessionism and its unrealistic trust in Soviet good will—as courting calamity. As the authors reasonably argue, it is vital that Congress reject SALT II, and it is high time that we withdraw from the SALT I treaty. The position of the U.S. is uncertain, but it is by no means hopeless.

Reviewed by A. JAMES McADAMS

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

*John P. East*, professor of political science at East Carolina University, is a member of the editorial boards of *The Political Science Reviewer* and *Modern Age*. Among other works, he has published studies on Willmoore Kendall, Frank S. Meyer and Richard M. Weaver.

*David Levy* is a lecturer in sociology at Middlesex Polytechnic, Enfield, England. His articles have appeared in England, France, Germany and the United States. At present he is preparing a book, *Thought and Order*.

*Svetozar Pejovich* is chairman of the department of economics at the University of Dallas and director of the Center for Study of the American Economy. His many books include *Governmental Policies and the Free Market: the U.S. Economy in the 1970's*, *Individual Liberty: Selected Works of W. H. Hutt* (with D. Klingaman) and *The Economics of Property Rights* (with E. Furubotn).

*M. E. Bradford*, professor of English at the University of Dallas, has written for *Modern Age* for a decade. Recently he has been lecturing throughout the country on the prescriptive view of the American Revolution.

*Edward E. Ericson, Jr.* is dean of academic affairs and professor of English at Northwestern College, Orange City, Iowa. He is the author of *Radicals in the University* and co-editor of *Religion and Modern Literature*. Currently he is working on a book on Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

*George H. Douglas*, professor of English at the University of Illinois in Urbana, has contributed to many scholarly and professional journals. He is presently completing a book dealing with Henry L. Mencken as a critic of American life.

*Donald Marquand Dozer* is professor emeritus of Latin American history and inter-American relations, University of California at Santa Barbara. He is the author of numerous books, amongst them *Latin America: Politics, Economics and Hemisphere Security*, *The Monroe Doctrine: Its Modern Significance* and *Are We Good Neighbors?*

*C. Richard Cleary* is professor of political science at La Salle College in Philadelphia. He has contributed chapters to many books, including *Crisis in the Great Republic* and *Medford: Pioneering Village*.

*Robert Drake*, professor of English at the University of Tennessee, is the author of three books of stories: *Amazing Grace*, *The Single Heart* and *The Burning Bush*.

The book reviews are contributed by: *Henry Regnery*, founder and chairman of the board of the Henry Regnery Company, Publishers; *Hugh Mercer Curtler*, chairman, department of philosophy, Southwest State University, Marshall, Minnesota; *J. Michael Bordelon*, who teaches at the University of Texas at Dallas; *David Levy*, lecturer in sociology at Middlesex Polytechnic, Enfield, England; *Haven Bradford Gow*, who teaches English at Southeastern Massachusetts University; *Francis Russell*, an author, who resides in Sandwich, Massachusetts; *R. D. Stock*, professor of English, University of Nebraska; *James W. Poultney*, professor emeritus of classical languages, Johns Hopkins University; *Juliana Geran Pilon*, Ph.D., University of Chicago; *A. James McAdams*, graduate student in political science, University of California, Berkeley.



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William C. Bark  
Louis I. Bredvold  
Yale Brozen  
Donald Davidson  
Lev E. Dobriansky  
Lawrence Henry Gipson  
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Wm. Oliver Martin  
Gerhart Niemeyer  
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Frank N. Trager  
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