

Community Reading Group Annotations November 2024

American Conservatism: Reclaiming an Intellectual Tradition

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A perennial question that Americans are familiar with is the nation's longstanding disagreement over the rightful authority of the federal government. Should the United States be a highly centralized bureaucracy or should power principally reside at the state or local municipality level. I myself have long struggled to reconcile my stance on this issue due to two personal beliefs. On the one hand, I ardently subscribe to the ideal of direct democracy. On the other, I strongly believe that direct democracy will tend toward tribalism if given full control over policy.

Hannah Arendt, who publicly derided segregation, famously struggled with a similar question, leading her to surprise many of her readers by opposing the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which would force Little Rock, Arkansas, to integrate African American students into its schools. For Arendt, state-forced association was a wrong-headed approach to the social problem of an individual's choice to dissociate from certain people. In essence, the Court's solution conflated a social problem with a political one. The government, Arendt writes in "Reflections of Little Rock," "can legitimately take no steps against social discrimination because government can act only in the name of equality—a principle which does not obtain in the social sphere."

Arendt's position on Little Rock has left her interpreters to disagree over whether she was at her core a conservative or progressive thinker—a debate that has yet to arrive at a consensus. Today, there are

familiar echoes of the above question in contemporary debates over reproductive healthcare and marriage equality. I'd like to interrogate my own feelings toward appeals to government decentralization, and I wish to do so by taking a deep dive into conservative thought. I cannot think of anything more productive than to take on this endeavor with a group of folks equally committed to the project of radical freedom.

–Andrew McNeely

American Conservatism – Introduction

How did the American conservative tradition acquire a reputation as both noxious and intellectually disreputable? Trumpism provides a convenient but utterly inadequate answer to that question. More important are two related factors that long precede Trump. The first factor is history—or at least the myth-history to which Americans choose to attribute abiding significance. The second is the anti-conservative progressive tradition, whose adherents long ago seized the high ground in American intellectual life and have successfully defended it ever since.

Of course, it is progressives who curate that myth-history and thereby determine the hierarchy of truths that it purportedly yields. Preeminent in determining that hierarchy were two specific events, the one related to politics and the other to America's role in the world. The first was the Great Depression. Then hard on its heels ... came World War II.

Broadly speaking, in each case, the analysis and prescriptions offered by leading conservatives proved at least inadequate. ... On the Great Depression, fearing an irreversible expansion of state power, conservatives resisted the conclusion that restoring economic health was going to require large-scale and protracted federal intervention. On World War II, until the attack on Pearl Harbor, many influential conservatives strenuously opposed U.S. entry into the conflict that Nazi Germany had begun and appeared to be winning, fearing a recurrence of the disillusionment that occurred just two decades earlier.

In the aftermath of World War II, with the liberal ascendancy in politics now at its height, liberal thinkers and activists denied even the existence of an intellectually coherent and morally acceptable alternative to their own beliefs. Liberals occupied, indeed owned, the “vital center” of American politics. **(10–11)**

What little most Americans today know about conservatives after World War II does not make for a flattering or reassuring record. [Post-war conservatives supported McCarthyism, dismissed the legitimacy of revolutionary governments, and defended the preservation of segregation.]

Yet let me suggest that what we have here are examples of self-described conservatives violating genuine conservative precepts. Reprehensible? Yes. Unforgivable? Well, only if promoting eugenics, enacting racist immigration laws, and criminalizing the possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages, as progressives did after World War I, invalidates the basic principles that progressives and liberals hold dear.

To his followers, Jesus had commanded: love God and love your neighbor. Over the course of two millennia, Christians acting in his name proceeded to commit numberless crimes up to and including genocide. Do these crimes nullify Christ's teachings? No, they merely testify to the abiding sinfulness of humankind. So too with American conservatism: it deserves to be judged by the core principles that conservatives have articulated, not by the occasions when those principles have been trampled upon. **(12–13)**

[Most] American conservatives, most of the time, subscribe to a common set of propositions from which to fashion a critique of American politics, policies, and culture and to proffer alternatives. Those propositions have evolved over time—conservatism is anything but static. Yet in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, they have come to center on the following:

- a commitment to individual liberty, tempered by the conviction that true freedom entails more than simply an absence of restraint;
- a belief in limited government, fiscal responsibility, and the rule of law;
- veneration for our cultural inheritance combined with a sense of stewardship for Creation;
- a reluctance to discard or tamper with traditional social arrangements;
- respect for the market as the generator of wealth combined with a wariness of the market's corrosive impact on human values;
- a deep suspicion of utopian promises, rooted in an appreciation of the recalcitrance of history and humankind's recurring susceptibility to hubris. **(13–14)**

[The] United States today finds itself at a crossroads. We confront perplexing problems to which there are no glib answers or easy solutions. The questions we face are fundamental: What is the common good? What is the meaning of freedom? What are the responsibilities of citizenship? What is America's proper role in the world? **(15)**

Russell Kirk - *Conservatism Defined* (1982)

William F. Buckley, Jr. – *Notes Toward an Empirical Definition of Conservatism* (1963)

Henry Adams – *The Dynamo and the Virgin* (1907)

George Santayana – *Materialism and Idealism in American Life* (1921)

Herbert Hoover – *Excerpt: American Individualism* (1922)

Zora Neale Hurston – *How it Feels to be Colored Me* (1928)

Irving Babbitt – *What I Believe* (1930)

Whitaker Chambers – *Foreword in the Form of a Letter to My Children* (1952)

Harry V. Jaffa – *On the Nature of Civil & Religious Liberty* (1964)

Joan Didion – *The Women's Movement* (1972)

Allan Bloom – *Our Ignorance* (1987)

Andrew Sullivan – *Here Comes the Groom* (1989)

Shelby Steele – *Affirmative Action* (1991)

Michael Novak – *Excerpt: The Catholic Ethic* (1993)

Christopher Lasch – *The Soul of Man under Secularism* (1995)

Glenn Loury – *Leadership Failure & the Loyalty Trap* (1995)

Antonin Scalia – *Dissent in Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015)

Randolph Bourne – *Excerpt: The State* (1918)

Albert Jay Nock – *Excerpt: Our Enemy, The State* (1935)

Richard Weaver – *The Great Stereopticon* (1948)

Milton Friedman – *Capitalism & Freedom* (1962)

Murray Rothbard – *Excerpt: For a New Liberty* (1973)

Patrick Deneen – *Unsustainable Liberalism* (2012)

Robert Nisbet – *The Loss of Community* (1953)

Wendell Berry – *Local Knowledge in the Age of Information* (2005)

Charles Beard – *Giddy Minds & Foreign Quarrels* (1939)

Reinhold Niebuhr – *Excerpt: The Irony of American History* (1952)

William Pfaff – *Excerpt: The Irony of Manifest Destiny* (2010)

Russell Kirk – ‘Conservatism Defined’

In recent years the term “conservatism” often has been employed to mean “reactionary” or “obscurantist” or “oldfangled. ... What does the word really signify?

Strictly speaking, conservatism is not a political system, and certainly not an ideology. In the phrase of H. Stuart Hughes, “Conservatism is the negation of ideology.” Instead, conservatism is a way of looking at the civil social order. Although certain general principles held by most conservatives may be described, there exists wide variety in application of these ideas from age to age and country to country. Thus conservative views and parties have existed under monarchical, aristocratic, despotic, and democratic regimes, and in a considerable range of economic systems.

Unlike socialism, anarchism, and even liberalism, then, conservatism offers no universal pattern of politics for adoption everywhere. On the contrary, conservatives reason that social institutions always must differ considerably from nation to nation, since any land’s politics must be the product of that country’s dominant religion, ancient customs, and historic experience

For our present purpose ... we may set down below several general principles upon which most eminent conservatives in some degree may be said to have agreed implicitly.

First, conservatives generally believe that there exists a transcendent moral order, to which we ought to try to conform the ways of society. ... This conviction contrasts strongly with the liberals’ utilitarian view of the state ... and with the radicals’ detestation of theological postulates.

Second, conservatives uphold the principle of social continuity. ... Thus the body social is a kind of spiritual corporation, comparable to the church; it may even be called a community of souls. ... Revolution slices through the arteries of a culture, a cure that kills.

Third, conservatives believe in what may be called the principle of prescription. [By prescription, they speak] of things established by immemorial usage. ... Conservatives argue that we [moderns] are unlikely to make any brave new discoveries in morals or politics or taste. It is perilous to weigh every passing issue on the basis of private judgment and private rationality. In politics we do well to abide by precedent and precept and even prejudice.

Fourth, conservatives are guided by their principle of prudence. ... Any public measure ought to be judged by its probable long-run consequences, not merely by temporary advantage or popularity. Liberals and radicals, the conservative holds, are imprudent: for they dash at their objectives without giving much heed to the risk of new abuses worse than the evils they hope to sweep away.

Fifth, conservatives pay attention to the principle of variety. They feel affection for the proliferating intricacy of long-established social institutions and modes of life, as distinguished from the narrowing uniformity and deadening egalitarianism of radical systems. For the preservation of a healthy diversity in any civilization, there must survive orders and classes, differences in material condition, and many sorts of inequality. The only true forms of equality are equality in the Last Judgment and equality before a just court of law; all other attempts at leveling lead, at best, to social stagnation.

Sixth, conservatives are chastened by their principle of imperfectibility. Human nature suffers irremediably from certain faults, the conservatives know. Man being imperfect, no perfect social order ever can be created. Because of human restlessness, mankind would grow rebellious under any utopian domination, and would break out once more in violent discontent—or else expire of boredom. To aim for utopia is to end in disaster.

William F. Buckley Jr. – ‘Notes Toward and Empirical Definition of Conservatism’

[Whittaker Chamber's critique of Ayn Rand in *The National Review* and his exclusion of her] from the conservative community was, I am sure, in part the result of her desiccated philosophy's conclusive incompatibility with the conservative's emphasis on transcendence, intellectual and moral; but also there is the incongruity of tone, that hard, schematic, implacable, unyielding dogmatism that is in itself intrinsically objectionable. Chambers knew that specific ideologies come and go, but that rhetorical totalitarianism is always in the air.

[The reception of Chamber's review of *Atlas Shrugged* proved to me,] beyond the unacceptability of Miss Rand's ideas and rhetoric, is that no conservative cosmology whose every star and planet are given in a master book of coordinates is very likely to sweep American conservatives off their feet. They are enough conservative and anti-ideological to resist totally closed systems, those systems that do not provide for deep and continuing mysteries. ... [I] predict on the basis of a long association with American conservatives that there isn't anybody around scribbling into his sacred book a series of all-fulfilling formulas which will serve the conservatives as an Apostles' Creed.

The conservative's distrust of the state ... raises inevitably the question: How far can one go? This side, the answer is, of anarchism—that should be obvious enough. But one man's anarchism is another man's statism.

There exists a small breed of men whose passionate distrust for the state has developed into a theology of sorts ... to which they adhere as devotedly as any religious fanatic ever attempted to adhere to the will of the Lord. I do not feel contempt for the endeavor of either type. It is intellectually stimulating to discuss alternatives to municipalized streets, as it is to speculate on whether God's wishes would best be served if we ordered fried or scrambled eggs for breakfast. ... But conservatives must concern themselves not only with ideals, but with matters of public policy, and I mean by that something more than the commonplace that one must maneuver within the limits of conceivable action. ... [We] can read with more than mere amusement [the anarcho-capitalist] Dr. Murray Rothbard's suggestion that lighthouses be sold to private tenants who will chase down the beam in speedboats and collect a dollar from the storm-tossed ship whose path it illuminates. [Many] dogmas are liberating because, however much damage they do when abused, it cannot compare with the damage that might have been done had whole peoples not felt their inhibiting influence. If our society seriously wondered whether or not to denationalize the lighthouses, it would not wonder at all whether to nationalize the medical profession.

But Dr. Rothbard and his merry anarchists wish to live their fanatical antistatism, and the result is a collision between the basic policies they urge and those urged by conservatives who recognize that the state sometimes is, and is today as never before, the necessary instrument of our proximate deliverance.

We ran into the [anti-communist] John Birch Society—or, more precisely, into Robert Welch. Mr. Welch's position is very well known. Scrubbed down, it is that one may reliably infer subjective motivation from objective result—e.g., if the West loses as much ground as demonstrably it has lost during the past twenty years to the [Communists], it can only be because those who made policy for the West were the enemy's agents. The ultima ratio of this position was the public disclosure ... that Dwight Eisenhower is a Communist. (To which the most perfect retort—was it Russell Kirk's?—was not so much analytical as artistic: “Eisenhower isn't a Communist—he is a golfer.”)

In criticizing Mr. Welch, we did not move into a hard philosophical front, as for instance we did in our criticisms of Miss Rand or of the neoanarchists. Rather, we moved into an organizational axiom, the conservative equivalent of the leftists' *pas d'ennemi à gauche*.

The defenders of Mr. Welch who are also severe critics of *National Review* are not by any means all of them addicts of the conspiracy school. They do belong, however inconsistently, to the school that says that we all must work together—as a general proposition, sound advice. Lenin distinguished between the sin of sectarianism, from which suffer all those who refuse to cooperate with anyone who does not share their entire position, right down to the dependent clauses, and the sin of opportunism, the weakness of those who are completely indiscriminate about their political associates.

The majority of those who broke with *National Review* as the result of our criticisms of Mr. Welch believe themselves to have done so in protest against *National Review's* sectarianism. In fact, I believe their resentment was primarily personal. They were distressed by an attack on a man who had ingratiated himself with them and toward whom their loyalty hardened in proportion as he was attacked. So their bitterness ran over, and now it is widely whispered that *National Review* has been “infiltrated.

A few years ago, Max Eastman, the author and poet, wrote sadly that he must withdraw from the masthead of *National Review* [because of its pro-religious stance].

Can you be a conservative and believe in God? Obviously. Can you be a conservative and not believe in God? This is an empirical essay, and so the answer is, as obviously, yes. Can you be a conservative and despise God and feel contempt for those who believe in Him? I would say no. True, Max Eastman is the only man who has left the masthead of *National Review* in protest against its proreligious sympathies, but it does not follow that this deed was eccentric; he, after all, was probably the only man on *National Review* with that old-time hostility to religion associated with evangelical atheism. If one dismisses religion as intellectually contemptible, it becomes difficult to identify oneself wholly with a movement in which religion plays a vital role.

The God hater, as distinguished from the agnostic (who says merely that he doesn't know) or simply the habitual atheist (who knows there is no God, but doesn't much care about those who disagree), regards those who believe in or tolerate religion as afflicted with short-circuited vision. Their faith is the result of a combination of intellectual defectiveness and psychological immaturity, leading to the use of analysis and rhetoric which Max Eastman “can't be tolerant of.

The agnostic can shrug his shoulders about the whole thing, caring not whether, in his time, the conflict between the proreligious and antireligious elements within conservatism will be resolved. There are so many other things to do than think about God. “Are you anything?” a lady flightily addressed at her dinner table a scholarly gentleman and firebrand conservative who has always managed to nudge aside questions or deflect conversational trends that seemed to be moving into hard confrontations involving religion. He smiled. “Well, I guess I'm not nothing,” and the conversation went on pleasantly. Max Eastman *is* nothing, and he can no more resist the opportunity to incant his nonbelief than the holy priest can resist the opportunity to proselyte—and so the tension.

Frank S. Meyer, "The Recrudescent American Conservatism," 1965

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In any era the problem of conservatism is to find the way to restore the tradition of the civilization and apply it in a new situation. But this means that conservatism is by its nature two-sided. It must at one and the same time be reactionary and presentist. It cannot content itself with appealing to the past. The very circumstances that call conscious conservatism into being create an irrevocable break with the past. The many complex aspects of the past had been held together in tension by the unity of the civilization, but that particular tension, that particular suspension in unity, can never be recreated after a revolutionary break. To attempt to recreate it would be pure unthinking reaction (what Toynbee calls "archaism") and would be bound to fail; nor could reaction truly restore the civilizational tradition to the recovery of which it was putatively directed. But while conservatism is not and cannot be naked reaction, neither can its concern with contemporary circumstances lead it, if it is to be true to itself, to be content with the status quo, with serving as a "moderating wing" within the existing situation. "For that situation is the result of a revolutionary break with the tradition of the civilization, and to "conserve" it is to accept the radical break with tradition that conservatism exists to overcome.

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Conservatism assumes the existence of an objective moral order based upon ontological foundations. Whether or not individual conservatives hold theistic views — and a large majority of them do — this outlook is derived from a theistic tradition. The essential point, however, is that the conservative looks at political and social questions with the assumption that there are objective standards for human conduct and criteria for the judgment of theories and institutions, which it is the duty of human beings to understand as thoroughly as they are able and to which it is their duty to approximate their actions.

The Liberal position, in contrast, is essentially operational and instrumental. As the conservative's world is, in Richard Weaver's phrase, a world of essences to be approximated, the Liberal's world is a world of problems to be solved. Hence, the conservative's concern with such questions of essence as individual liberty and civilizational tradition. Hence, the Liberal's concern with modes and operations, such as democracy (a mode or means of government which implies that what is morally right is what fifty per cent plus one think is right), or progress (a concept that derives norms from the operation of historical events, establishing as the good the direction in which events have been moving and seem presently to be moving).

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Since regnant Liberalism creates an atmosphere in which positive solutions to every conceivable problem are demanded, to be "negative" is the greatest of sins. But if conservatism is to be true to its vision, a large portion of its program will be negative insofar as proposing governmental action to remedy social situations is concerned. It will propose the limitation of government in order to free the energies of citizens to go

about remedying these situations in their several ways as they see best. In the Liberal atmosphere this can easily be made to sound callous, hard-hearted, uncaring. But to maintain that hardships, deprivations, social imbalances are not properly or effectively solved by state action is not to deny their existence. Rather it is to call upon the imaginative exercise of voluntary altruistic effort to restore a widespread sense of responsibility for social well-being and to guard against the moral degradation of citizens as direct clients of the state or as indirect petitioners for community largesse.

Henry Adams, "The Dynamo and the Virgin (1900)," 1907

49-50

A historian who asked only to learn enough to be as futile as Langley or Kelvin, made rapid progress under this teaching, and mixed himself up in the tangle of ideas until he achieved a sort of Paradise of ignorance vastly consoling to his fatigued senses. He wrapped himself in vibrations and rays which were new, and he would have hugged Marconi and Branly had he met them, as he hugged the dynamo; while he lost his arithmetic in trying to figure out the equation between the discoveries and the economies of force. The economies, like the discoveries, were absolute, supersensual, occult; incapable of expression in horse-power. What mathematical equivalent could he suggest as the value of a Branly coherer? Frozen air, or the electric furnace had some scale of measurement, no doubt, if somebody could invent a thermometer adequate to the purpose; but X-rays had played no part whatever in man's consciousness, and the atom itself had figured only as a fiction of thought. In these seven years man had translated himself into a new universe which had no common scale of measurement with the old. He had entered a supersensual world, in which he could measure nothing except by chance collisions of movements imperceptible to his senses, perhaps even imperceptible to his instruments, but perceptible to each other, and so to some known ray at the end of the scale. Langley seemed prepared for anything, even for an indeterminable number of universes interfused, — physics stark mad in metaphysics.

53-54

Once St. Gaudens took him down to Amiens, with a party of Frenchmen, to see the Cathedral. Not until they found themselves actually studying the sculpture of the western portal, did it dawn on Adams's mind that, for his purposes, St. Gaudens on that spot had more interest to him than the cathedral itself. Great men before great monuments express great truths, provided they are not taken too solemnly. Adams never tired of quoting the supreme phrase of his idol Gibbon, before the Gothic Cathedrals: — "I darted a contemptuous look on the stately monuments of superstition." Even in the footnotes of his history, Gibbon had never inserted a bit of humor more human than this, and one would have paid largely for a photograph of the fat little historian, on the background of Notre Dame of Amiens, trying to persuade his readers — perhaps himself, — that he was darting a contemptuous look on the stately monument, for which he felt in fact the respect which every man of his vast study and active mind always feels before objects worthy of it; but besides the humor, one felt also the relation. Gibbon ignored the Virgin, because in 1789, religious monuments were out

of fashion. In 1900 his remark sounded fresh and simple as the green fields to ears that had heard a hundred years of other remarks, mostly no more fresh and certainly less simple. Without malice, one might find it more instructive than a whole lecture of Ruskin. One sees what one brings, and at that moment Gibbon brought the French Revolution. Ruskin brought reaction against the Revolution. St. Gaudens had passed beyond all. He liked the stately monuments much more than he liked Gibbon or Ruskin; he loved their dignity; their unity; their scale; their lines; their lights and shadows; their decorative sculpture; but he was even less conscious than they of the force that created it all, — the Virgin, the Woman, — by whose genius “the stately monuments of superstition” were built, through which she was expressed. He would have seen more meaning in Isis with the cow’s horns, at Edfoo, who expressed the same thought. The art remained, but the energy was lost even upon the artist.

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The pursuit turned out to be long and tortuous, leading at last into the vast forests of scholastic science. From Zeno to Descartes, hand in hand with Thomas Aquinas, Montaigne and Pascal, one stumbled as stupidly as though one were still a German student of 1860. Only with the instinct of despair could one force oneself into this old thicket of ignorance after having been repulsed at a score of entrances more promising and more popular. Thus far, no path had led anywhere, unless perhaps to an exceedingly modest living. Forty-five years of study had proved to be quite futile for the pursuit of power; one controlled no more force in 1900 than in 1850, although the amount of force controlled by society had enormously increased. The secret of education still hid itself somewhere behind ignorance, and one fumbled over it as feebly as ever. In such labyrinths, the staff is a force almost more necessary than the legs; the pen becomes a sort of blind-man’s dog, to keep him from falling into the gutters. The pen works for itself, and acts like a hand, modelling the plastic material over and over again to the form that suits it best. The form is never arbitrary, but is a sort of growth like crystallization, as any artist knows too well; for often the pencil or pen runs into side-paths and shapelessness, loses its relations, stops or is bogged. Then it has to return on its trail, and recover, if it can, its line of force. The result of a year’s work depends more on what is struck out than on what is left in; on the sequence of the main lines of thought, than on their play or variety.

American Conservatism (Adams & Lippman)

The Dynamo and the Virgin (1907) by Henry Adams

p. 47-48

Adams haunted [Great Exposition of 1900 until its close], aching to absorb knowledge, and helpless to find it. ... he was thus meditating chaos, Langley came by, and showed it to him. [T]he Exhibition dropped its superfluous rags and stripped itself to the skin, for Langley knew what to study, and why, and how; ... [realizing that] **true science was the development or economy of forces.**

Nothing in education is so astonishing as the amount of ignorance it accumulates in the form of inert facts. ... Langley, with the ease of a great master of experiment, threw out ... every exhibit that did not **reveal a new application of force**, and naturally threw out, almost the whole art-exhibit. Equally, he ignored almost the whole industrial exhibit. **He led his pupil directly to the forces.**

p. 48-49

[Langley] showed [Adams] the great hall of dynamos, and explained how little he knew about electricity or **force of any kind**... To him, the **dynamo itself was but an ingenious channel for conveying somewhere the heat latent in a few tons of poor coal hidden in a dirty engine-house carefully kept out of sight**; but to Adams the dynamo became a symbol of infinity. [Adams] **began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross.** The planet itself seemed less impressive, in its old-fashioned, deliberate, annual or daily revolution, than this huge wheel, revolving within arm's-length at some vertiginous speed, and barely murmuring,—scarcely humming an audible **warning** to stand a hair's-breadth further **for respect of power**,—while it would not wake the baby lying close against its frame. **Before the end, one began to pray to it; inherited instinct taught the natural expression of man before silent and infinite force. Among the thousand symbols of ultimate energy, the dynamo was not so human as some, but it was the most expressive.**

p. 49

... For Adams's [dynamo] **value lay chiefly in its occult mechanism.** ... **the break of continuity amounted to [an] abysmal fracture for a historian's objects.** No more relation could he discover between the steam and the electric current than between the Cross and the cathedral. **The forces were interchangeable if not reversible, but he could see only an absolute fiat in electricity as in faith.** Langley ... constantly repeated that **the new forces were anarchical**, and **especially that he was not responsible for the new rays, that were ... parricidal in their wicked spirit towards science.** His own rays, with which he had doubled the solar spectrum, were altogether harmless and beneficent; **but Radium denied its God**,—or, what was to Langley the same thing, denied the truths of his Science. **The force was wholly new.**

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and rays which were new, ... while **he lost his arithmetic** in trying to figure out the equation between the discoveries and the economies of force.

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p. 50

Historians undertake to **arrange sequences**,—called stories, or histories,—assuming in silence **a relation of cause and effect.** ... Where [Adams] saw sequence, other men saw something quite different, and **no one saw the same unit of measure.** ... [Adams] insisted on a **relation of sequence**, and if he could not reach it by one method, he would try as many methods as science knew. Satisfied that the **sequence of men led to nothing** and that the **sequence of their society could lead no further**, while the mere sequence of time was artificial, and the **sequence of thought was chaos**, he turned at last to the **sequence of force**; and thus it happened that, after ten years' pursuit, he found himself lying in the Gallery of Machines at the Great Exposition of 1900, with **his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of force totally new.**

p. 50-51

Since no one else showed much concern, an elderly person without other cares, had no need to betray alarm. ... the nearest approach to the revolution of 1900 was that of 310, when Constantine set up the Cross. **The rays that Langley disowned, as well as those which he fathered, were occult, supersensual, irrational; they were a revelation of mysterious energy like that of the Cross;** they were what, in terms of mediæval science, were called immediate modes of the divine substance.

[Adams] **was thus reduced to his last resources.** Clearly if he was bound to **reduce** all these forces to a common value, this common value could have no measure but that of their attraction on his own mind. **He must treat them as they had been felt; as convertible, reversible, interchangeable attractions on thought.** He made up his mind to venture it; he would risk translating rays into faith. Such a **reversible process** would vastly amuse a chemist, but the chemist could not deny that he, or some of his fellow physicists, could feel the force of both. When Adams was a boy in Boston, the best chemist in the place had probably never heard of Venus except by way of scandal, or of the Virgin except as idolatry; neither had he heard of dynamos or automobiles or radium; yet his mind was ready to feel the force of all, though the rays were unborn and the women were dead.

p. 51

Here opened another totally new education,... the most hazardous of all. ... **[The] two kingdoms of force had nothing in common but attraction.** They were as different as a magnet is from gravitation, supposing one knew what a magnet was, or gravitation, or love. The force of the Virgin was still felt at Lourdes, and seemed to be as potent as X-rays; but **in America neither Venus nor Virgin ever had value as force;—at most as sentiment.** No American had ever been truly afraid of either.

This problem in dynamics gravely perplexed [Adams]. The Woman had once been supreme; in France she still seemed potent, **not merely as a sentiment but as a force;**... The trait was notorious, and often humorous, but **anyone brought up among Puritans knew that sex was sin. In any previous age, sex was strength. Neither art nor beauty was needed. ... She was Goddess because of her force; she was the animated dynamo; she was reproduction—the greatest and most mysterious of all energies; all she needed was to be fecund.**

p. 52

...[The vast majority of **American artists**] **had used sex for sentiment, never for force;** to them, Eve was a tender flower, and Herodias an unfeminine horror. American **art**, like the American **language** and American **education** was as far as possible sexless. **Society regarded this victory over sex as its greatest triumph, and the historian readily admitted it,** since the **moral issue**, for the moment, did not concern one who was studying the relations of unmoral force. He cared nothing for the sex of the dynamo until he could measure its energy.

p. 53

Vaguely seeking a clue, he wandered through the art-exhibit, and, in his stroll, stopped almost every day before St. Gaudens' General Sherman... **Of all the American artists who gave to American art whatever life it breathed in the seventies, St. Gaudens was perhaps the most sympathetic, but certainly the most inarticulate.** ...St. Gaudens could never discuss or ... suggest artistic arguments for giving to his work the forms that he **felt.** ... he was no egoist; **his simplicity of thought was excessive; he could not imitate, or give any form but his own to the creations of his hand.** [St. Gaudens was a singular artist of insight and work]

p. 53-54

* Once St. Gaudens took him down to Amiens, ... to see the Cathedral. Not until [studied] the sculpture of the western portal, did it dawn on Adams's [that], **St. Gaudens [was] more interesting to [Adams] than the cathedral itself.** Great men before great monuments express great truths, provided they are not taken too solemnly.

Adams never tired of quoting the supreme phrase of his idol Gibbon, before the Gothic Cathedrals:—"I darted a contemptuous look on **the stately monuments of superstition.**" ... **Gibbon** had never inserted a bit of humor more human than this, ... the fat little historian ... trying to persuade his readers—perhaps himself,—"that he was darting a contemptuous look on the stately monument, for which **he felt in fact the respect** which every man of his vast study and active mind always feels before objects worthy of it; but besides the humor, one felt also the relation.

Gibbon ignored the Virgin, because in 1789, religious monuments were out of fashion. In 1900 his remark sounded fresh and simple as the green fields to ears that had heard a hundred years of other remarks, mostly no more fresh and certainly less simple. Without malice, one might find it more instructive than a whole lecture of Ruskin. **One sees what one brings, and at that moment Gibbon brought the French Revolution.** Ruskin brought reaction against the Revolution.

[St. Gaudens] liked the stately monuments much more than he liked Gibbon or Ruskin; he loved their dignity; their unity; their scale; their lines; their lights and shadows; their decorative sculpture; **but he was even less conscious than they of the force that created it all...The art remained, but the energy was lost even upon the artist.**

p. 54-55

...Each had but half of a nature, and when they came together before the Virgin of Amiens they ought both to have felt in her the force that made them one; but it was not so. To Adams she became more than ever a **channel of force**; to St. Gaudens she remained as before a **channel of taste**. For a symbol of power, St. Gaudens instinctively preferred the horse, as was plain in his horse and Victory of the Sherman monument. Doubtless Sherman also felt it so. The attitude was so American that, for at least forty years, **Adams had never realised that any other could be in sound taste.**

[Adams] knew that only since 1895 had he begun to feel the Virgin or Venus as force, and not everywhere even so. At Chartres—perhaps at Lourdes,—possibly at Cnidos if one could still find there the divinely naked Aphrodite of Praxiteles,—but otherwise one must look for force to the Goddesses of Indian mythology. The idea died out long ago in the German and English stock. ... [St. Gaudens did not feel the] **Goddesses as power**,—only as reflected emotion, human expression, beauty, purity, taste, scarcely even as sympathy. ... **felt a railway-train as power**; yet [he], and all other artists constantly complained that **the power embodied in a railway-train could never be embodied in art**. All the steam in the world could not, like the Virgin, build Chartres.

p. 55-56

...[As] **symbol or energy, the Virgin had acted as the greatest force the western world ever felt**, and had drawn man's activities to herself more strongly than any other power, natural or supernatural, had ever done; the historian's business was to follow the track of the energy; to find where it came from and where it went to; its complex source and shifting channels; its values, equivalents, conversions. **It could scarcely be more complex than radium; it could hardly be deflected, diverted, polarised, absorbed more perplexingly than other radiant matter.** Adams knew nothing about any of them, but as a mathematical problem of influence on human progress, **though all were occult, all reacted on his mind, and he rather inclined to think the Virgin easiest to handle.**

p. 56

* The pursuit turned out to be long and tortuous, leading at last into the vast forests of scholastic science. Only with the **instinct of despair** could one force oneself into this old thicket of ignorance ... Thus far, no path had led anywhere, unless perhaps to an exceedingly modest living. Forty-five years of **study had proved to be quite futile for the pursuit of power; one controlled**

no more force in 1900 than in 1850, although the amount of force controlled by society had enormously increased.

The secret of education still hid itself somewhere behind ignorance, and one fumbled over it as feebly as ever. In such labyrinths, **the staff is a force almost more necessary than the legs**; the pen becomes a sort of blind-man's dog, **to keep him from falling into the gutters**. The pen works for itself, and acts like a hand, **modelling the plastic material over and over again to the form that suits it best**. The **form is never arbitrary, but is a sort of growth** like **crystallization**, as any artist knows too well; for often the pencil or pen runs into side-paths and **shapelessness, loses its relations**, stops or is bogged. **Then it has to return on its trail, and recover, if it can, its line of force**. The result of a year's work **depends more on what is struck out than on what is left in**; on the sequence of the main lines of thought, than on their play or variety.

Compelled once more to lean heavily on this support, Adams ..., **laboriously striking out, altering, burning, experimenting, until the year had expired**, the Exposition had long been closed, and winter **drawing to its end**, before **he sailed from Cherbourg**, on January 19, 1901, **for home**.

FROM "Journalism and the Higher Law" [1920] by Walter Lippman

p. 57-58

[In Boston 1690. The second issue of *Publick Occurrences* did not appear because the Governor and Council suppressed it. They found ... the editor], had printed "**reflections of a very high nature**." Even to-day some of his reflections seem very high indeed. In his prospectus he had written:

That something may be done toward the **Curing**, or at least the **Charming of that Spirit of Lying**, which prevails amongst us, wherefore nothing shall be entered, but what we have reason to believe is true, **repairing to the best fountains for our Information**. And when there appears any material **mistake** in anything that is collected, it shall be **corrected in the next**. Moreover, the Publisher of these Occurrences is willing to engage, that whereas, there are many False Reports, maliciously made, and spread among us, if any well-minded person will be at the **pains to trace any such false Report**, so far as to find out and Convict the First Raiser of it, he will in this Paper (unless just Advice be given to the contrary) **expose the Name of such Person, as A malicious Raiser of a false Report**. It is suppos'd that none will dislike this Proposal, but such as intend to be guilty of so **villainous** a Crime.

Everywhere to-day men are conscious that somehow they must deal with questions more intricate than any that church or school had prepared them to understand. Increasingly they know that they cannot understand them if the facts are not quickly and steadily available. Increasingly they are baffled because the facts are not available; and they are wondering whether government by consent can survive in a time when the manufacture of consent is an unregulated private enterprise. For in an exact sense the present crisis of western democracy is a crisis in journalism.

I do not agree with those who think that the sole cause is corruption. There is plenty of corruption, to be sure, moneyed control, caste pressure, financial and social bribery, ribbons, dinner parties, clubs, petty politics.

p. 58

... Since the war, especially, editors have come to believe that their highest duty is not to report but to instruct, not to print news but to save civilization, not to publish what Benjamin Harris calls "the Circumstances of Publique Affairs, both abroad and at home," but to keep the nation on the straight and narrow path. **Like the Kings of England, they have elected themselves Defenders of the Faith.** "For five years," says Mr. Cobb of the *New York World*, "there has been no free play of public opinion in the world. Confronted by the inexorable necessities of war, governments conscripted public opinion. . . . They goose-stepped it. They taught it to stand at attention and salute. . . . It sometimes seems that after the armistice was signed, millions of Americans must have taken a vow that they would never again do any thinking for themselves. They were willing to die for their country, but not willing to think for it." That minority, which is proudly prepared to think for it, and not only prepared, but cocksure that it alone knows how to think for it, has adopted the theory that the public should know what is good for it.

p. 59-60

The work of reporters has thus become confused with the work of preachers, revivalists, prophets and agitators. The current theory of American newspaperdom is that an abstraction like the truth and a grace like fairness must be sacrificed whenever anyone thinks the necessities of civilization require the sacrifice....

They believe that edification is more important than veracity. **They** believe it profoundly, violently, relentlessly. **They** preen themselves upon it. To patriotism, as **they** define it from day to day, all other considerations must yield. That is **their** pride.

And yet what is this but one more among myriad examples of the doctrine that **the end justifies the means**. A more insidiously misleading rule of conduct was, I believe, never devised among men. It was a **plausible** rule **as long as men believed** that an omniscient and **benevolent Providence taught them what end to seek**.

But now that men are critically aware of how their purposes are special to their age, their locality, their interests, and their limited knowledge, it is blazing arrogance to sacrifice hard-won standards of credibility to some special purpose. It is nothing but the doctrine that I want what I want when I want it. Its monuments are the Inquisition and the invasion of Belgium. It is the reason given for almost every act of unreason, the law invoked whenever lawlessness justifies itself. At bottom it is nothing but the **anarchical nature of man imperiously hacking its way through**.

p. 60

Just as the most poisonous form of disorder is the mob incited from high places the most **immoral** act the **immorality** of a government, so the most destructive form of untruth is sophistry and propaganda by those whose profession it is to report the news. **The news columns are common carriers**. When those who control them arrogate to themselves the right to determine by their own consciences what shall be reported and for what purpose, democracy is unworkable. **Public opinion** is blockaded.

For **when a people can no longer confidently repair 'to the best fountains for their information,' then anyone's guess and anyone's rumor, each man's hope and each man's whim becomes the basis of government.** All that the sharpest **critics of democracy** have alleged is true, if there is no steady supply of trustworthy and relevant news. Incompetence and aimlessness, corruption and disloyalty, panic and ultimate disaster, must come to any people which is denied an assured access to the facts. No one can manage anything on **pap**. Neither can a people.

p. 60-61

Statesmen may devise policies; they will end in futility, as so many have recently ended, if the propagandists and censors can put a painted screen where there should be a window to the world. ... [T]he news is the chief source of the opinion by which government now proceeds. So long as there is **interposed between the ordinary citizen and the facts a news organization** determining by entirely private and unexamined standards, no matter how lofty, what he shall know, and hence what he shall believe, **no one will be able to say that the substance of democratic government is secure.** The theory of our constitution, says Mr. Justice Holmes, is that truth is the only ground upon which men's wishes safely can be carried out. In so far as those who purvey the news make of their own beliefs a higher law than truth, they are attacking the foundations of our constitutional system. There can be no higher law in journalism than to tell the truth and shame the devil.

George Santayana, "Materialism and Idealism in American Life," 1921

62-63

In matters of morals, manners, and art, the danger of comparisons is not merely that they may prove invidious, by ranging qualities in an order of merit which might wound somebody's vanity; the danger is rather that comparisons may distort comprehension, because in truth good qualities are all different in kind, and free lives are different in spirit. Comparison is the expedient of those who cannot reach the heart of the things compared; and no philosophy is more external and egotistical than that which places the essence of a thing in its relation to something else. In reality, at the centre of every natural being there is something individual and incommensurable, a seed with its native impulses and aspirations, shaping themselves as best they can in their given environment. Variation is a consequence of freedom, and the slight but radical diversity of souls in turn makes freedom requisite. Instead of instituting in his mind any comparisons between the United States and other nations, I would accordingly urge the reader to forget himself and, in so far as such a thing may be possible for him or for me, to transport himself ideally with me into the outer circumstances of American life, the better to feel its inner temper, and to see how inevitably the American shapes his feelings and judgements, honestly reporting all things as they appear from his new and unobstructed station.

67

Idealism in the American accordingly goes hand in hand with present contentment and with foresight of what the future very likely will actually bring. He is not a revolutionist; he believes he is already on the right track and moving towards an excellent destiny. In revolutionists, on the contrary, idealism is founded on dissatisfaction and expresses it. What exists seems to them an absurd jumble of irrational accidents and bad habits, and they want the future to be based on reason and to be the pellucid embodiment of all their maxims. All their zeal is for something radically different from the actual and (if they only knew it) from the possible; it is ideally simple, and they love it and believe in it because their nature craves it. They think life would be set free by the destruction of all its organs. They are therefore extreme idealists in the region of hope, but not at all, as poets and artists are, in the region of perception and memory.

70-71

The pioneer must devote himself to preparations; he must work for the future, and it is healthy and dutiful of him to love his work for its own sake. At the same time, unless reference to an ultimate purpose is at least virtual in all his activities, he runs the danger of becoming a living automaton, vain and ignominious in its mechanical constancy. Idealism about work can hide an intense materialism about life. Man, if he is a rational being, cannot live by bread alone nor be a labourer merely; he must eat and work in view of an ideal harmony which overarches all his days, and which is realised in the way they hang together, or in some ideal issue which they have in common. Otherwise, though his technical philosophy may call itself idealism, he is a materialist in morals; he

esteems things, and esteems himself, for mechanical uses and energies. Even sensualists, artists, and pleasure-lovers are wiser than that, for though their idealism may be desultory or corrupt, they attain something ideal, and prize things only for their living effects, moral though perhaps fugitive. Sensation, when we do not take it as a signal for action, but arrest and peruse what it positively brings before us, reveals something ideal—a colour, shape, or sound; and to dwell on these presences, with no thought of their material significance, is an æsthetic or dreamful idealism. To pass from this idealism to the knowledge of matter is a great intellectual advance, and goes with dominion over the world; for in the practical arts the mind is adjusted to a larger object, with more depth and potentiality in it; which is what makes people feel that the material world is real, as they call it, and that the ideal world is not. Certainly the material world is real; for the philosophers who deny the existence of matter are like the critics who deny the existence of Homer. If there was never any Homer, there must have been a lot of other poets no less Homeric than he; and if matter does not exist, a combination of other things exists which is just as material. But the intense reality of the material world would not prevent it from being a dreary waste in our eyes, or even an abyss of horror, if it brought forth no spiritual fruits. In fact, it does bring forth spiritual fruits, for otherwise we should not be here to find fault with it, and to set up our ideals over against it. Nature is material, but not materialistic; it issues in life, and breeds all sorts of warm passions and idle beauties. And just as sympathy with the mechanical travail and turmoil of nature, apart from its spiritual fruits, is moral materialism, so the continual perception and love of these fruits is moral idealism—happiness in the presence of immaterial objects and harmonies, such as we envisage in affection, speculation, religion, and all the forms of the beautiful.

Herbert Hoover, “American Individualism,” 1922

78

No doubt, individualism run riot, with no tempering principle, would provide a long category of inequalities, of tyrannies, dominations, and injustices. America, however, has tempered the whole conception of individualism by the injection of a definite principle, and from this principle it follows that attempts at domination, whether in government or in the processes of industry and commerce, are under an insistent curb. If we would have the values of individualism, their stimulation to initiative, to the development of hand and intellect, to the high development of thought and spirituality, they must be tempered with that firm and fixed ideal of American individualism—an equality of opportunity. If we would have these values we must soften its hardness and stimulate progress through that sense of service that lies in our people.

Therefore, it is not the individualism of other countries for which I would speak, but the individualism of America. Our individualism differs from all others because it embraces these great ideals: *that while we build our society upon the attainment of the individual, we shall safeguard to every individual an equality of opportunity to take that position in the community to which his intelligence, character, ability, and ambition entitle him; that we keep the social solution free from frozen strata of classes; that we shall stimulate effort of each individual to achievement; that through an enlarging sense of responsibility and understanding*

we shall assist him to this attainment; while he in turn must stand up to the emery wheel of competition.

82-83

The maintenance of productivity and the advancement of the things of the spirit depend upon the ever-renewed supply from the mass of those who can rise to leadership. Our social, economic, and intellectual progress is almost solely dependent upon the creative minds of those individuals with imaginative and administrative intelligence who create or who carry discoveries to widespread application. No race possesses more than a small percentage of these minds in a single generation. But little thought has ever been given to our racial dependency upon them. Nor that our progress is in so large a measure due to the fact that with our increased means of communication these rare individuals are today able to spread their influence over so enlarged a number of lesser capable minds as to have increased their potency a million-fold. In truth, the vastly greater productivity of the world with actually less physical labor is due to the wider spread of their influence through the discovery of these facilities. And they can arise solely through the selection that comes from the free-running mills of competition. They must be free to rise from the mass; they must be given the attraction of premiums to effort.

Leadership is a quality of the individual. It is the individual alone who can function in the world of intellect and in the field of leadership. If democracy is to secure its authorities in morals, religion, and statesmanship, it must stimulate leadership from its own mass. Human leadership cannot be replenished by selection like queen bees, by divine right or bureaucracies, but by the free rise of ability, character, and intelligence.

Even so, leadership cannot, no matter how brilliant, carry progress far ahead of the average of the mass of individual units. Progress of the nation is the sum of progress in its individuals. Acts and ideas that lead to progress are born out of the womb of the individual mind, not out of the mind of the crowd. The crowd only feels: it has no mind of its own which can plan. The crowd is credulous, it destroys, it consumes, it hates, and it dreams—but it never builds. It is one of the most profound and important of exact psychological truths that man in the mass does not think but only feels. The mob functions only in a world of emotion. The demagogue feeds on mob emotions and his leadership is the leadership of emotion, not the leadership of intellect and progress. Popular desires are no criteria to the real need; they can be determined only by deliberative consideration, by education, by constructive leadership.

American Conservatism (Hurstun & Babbitt)

“How It Feels To Be Colored Me” (1928) Zora Neale Hurston

p. 84-85

I am colored but I offer nothing in the way of extenuating circumstances except the fact that I am the only Negro in the United States whose grandfather on the mother's side was **not** an Indian chief.

I remember the very day that I became colored. Up to my thirteenth year I lived in the little Negro town of Eatonville, Florida. It is exclusively a colored town. The only white people I knew passed through the town going to or coming from Orlando. ...

The front porch might seem a daring place for the rest of the town, but it was a gallery seat to me. My favorite place was atop the gate-post. **Proscenium box for a born first-nighter.** Not only did I enjoy the show, but **I didn't mind the actors knowing that I liked it ...**

During this period, white people differed from colored to me only in that they rode through town and never lived there. They liked to hear me “speak pieces” and sing and wanted to see me dance the parse-me-la, and gave me generously of their small silver for doing these things, which seemed strange to me for **I wanted to do them so much that I needed bribing to stop.** Only they didn't know it. The colored people gave no dimes. They deplored any joyful tendencies in me, but I was their Zora nevertheless. I belonged to them, to the nearby hotels, to the county—everybody's Zora.

p. 85-86

But changes came in the family when I was thirteen, and I was sent to school in Jacksonville. I left Eatonville, the town of the oleanders, as Zora. When I disembarked from the riverboat at Jacksonville, she was no more. **It seemed that I had suffered a sea change.** I was not Zora of Orange County any more, I was now a little colored girl. I found it out in certain ways. In my heart as well as in the mirror, I became a fast brown—warranted not to rub nor run.

But I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eyes. I do not mind at all. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a low-down dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it. Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. **No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.**

... I am off to a flying start and I must not halt in the stretch to look behind and weep. **Slavery is the price I paid for civilization, and the choice was not with me. It is a bully adventure and worth all that I have paid through my ancestors for it.** No one on earth ever had a greater chance for glory. The world to be won and nothing to be lost. It is thrilling to think—to know that for any act of mine, I shall get twice as much praise or twice as much blame. It is quite exciting to hold the center of the national stage, with the spectators not knowing whether to laugh or to weep.

p. 86- 87

... [When] I sit in the drafty basement that is The New World Cabaret with a white person, **my color comes**. ... In the abrupt way that jazz orchestras have, this one plunges into a number. It loses no time in circumlocutions, but gets right down to business. It constricts the thorax and splits the heart with its tempo and narcotic harmonies. This orchestra grows rambunctious, rears on its hind legs and attacks the **tonal veil** with primitive fury, rending it, clawing it until it breaks through to the jungle beyond. I follow those heathen—follow them exultingly. **I dance wildly inside myself; I yell within, I whoop;** I shake my assegai above my head, I hurl it true to the mark yeeeeooww! I am in the jungle and living in the jungle way. My face is painted red and yellow, and my body is painted blue. My pulse is throbbing like a war drum. I want to slaughter something—give pain, give death to what, I do not know. **But the piece ends.** The men of the orchestra wipe their lips and rest their fingers. **I creep back slowly to the veneer we call civilization with the last tone and find the white friend sitting motionless in his seat, smoking calmly.**

“Good music they have here,” he remarks, drumming the table with his fingertips.

Music! **The great blobs of purple and red emotion have not touched him.** He has only heard what I felt. He is far away and I see him but dimly across the ocean and the continent that have fallen between us. **He is so pale with his whiteness then and I am so colored.**

p. 87

At certain times I have no race, I am me. When I set my hat at a certain angle and saunter down Seventh Avenue, Harlem City, feeling as snooty as the lions in front of the Forty-Second Street Library, for instance. ... **The cosmic Zora emerges.** I belong to no race nor time, **I am the eternal feminine with its string of beads.**

I have no separate feeling about being an American citizen and colored. **I am merely a fragment of the Great Soul that surges within the boundaries.** My country, right or wrong.

Sometimes, I feel discriminated against, but it does not make me angry. It merely astonishes me. **How can any deny themselves the pleasure of my company! It's beyond me.**

“What I Believe: Rousseau and Religion” (1930) Irving Babbitt

p. 91-92

...Among the multitude of “truths” that flashed upon **Rousseau** ..., [is] that **“man is naturally good and that it is by our institutions alone that men become wicked.”**

Practically, the warfare of the Rousseauistic crusader has been even less against institutions than **against those who control and administer them—kings and priests in the earlier stages of the movement, capitalists in our own day.** ... the superior imaginative appeal of the new dualism based on the **myth of man’s natural goodness**, the rôle he has actually played has been that of arch-radical...

[...] this Rousseauistic influence a steady yielding of the theological to the sociological or... the humanitarian view of life. [The] total philosophy of **humanitarianism** an ingredient ... that may be defined as **utilitarian**. ... [has] a central drive: they always have encouraged and ..., always **will encourage the substitution of a kingdom of man for the traditional Kingdom of God—the exaltation of material over spiritual “comfort,” the glorification of man’s increasing control over the forces of nature under the name of progress.**

p. 93 (Pt.2)

...From all the confusion, however, there finally emerges a clear-cut issue—whether **humanitarianism, or ..., the utilitarian-sentimental movement**, has supplied any effective equivalent for Burke’s two principles. As for the “spirit of a gentleman,” its decline ... It has even been maintained that in America, the country in which the collapse of traditional standards has been most complete, the gentleman is at a positive disadvantage in the world of practical affairs; he is likely to get on more quickly if he assumes the “mucker pose.”³

... **everything in our modern substitutes for religion**... [converges] upon the **idea of service**. The crucial question is whether ... the immense machinery of power that has resulted from activity of the utilitarian type can be made, ... **to serve disinterested ends**; whether it will not rather minister to the egoistic aims either of national groups or of individuals.

p. 95, 96

[What is it] the modern man has tended to lose with the decline of the older dualism.... The way would thus be open, ... for a swift flanking movement on the **behaviorists and other naturalistic psychologists, who are to be accounted at present among the chief enemies of human nature.**

[Humanitarianism, or, if one prefers, the utilitarian-sentimental movement] in their use of words like **“virtue” and “conscience,”** they have eliminated more or less completely, in favor of **vital impulse (élan vital), the equally vital principle of control (frein vital)**—in short, the dualistic element that both religion and humanism require.

p. 96-97

The half truth ... used to compromise religion ...though **religion is in itself** something quite distinct from emotion, it is in its ordinary manifestations **very much mixed up with emotion**. [For example] this error in its latest and fashionable form. ... Reverend N. P. Williams seeks to show that St. Augustine's experience of grace or, what amounts to the same thing, his love of God, was only a "sublimation" of his "lust." St. Augustine was a very passionate man and his passionateness no doubt entered into his love of God. But if it could be shown that the love of God was in St. Augustine or any other of the major saints merely emotion, sublimated or unsublimated, **religion would be only the "illusion" that Freud himself has declared it to be**. The **psychoanalytical divine**, who is, I am told, a fairly frequent type in England, is about the worst *mélange des genres* that has appeared even in the present age of confusion...

Religion has suffered not only from the Rousseauist but also from the pseudo-scientist. If the Rousseauist gives to emotion a primacy that does not belong to it, **the pseudo-scientist claims for physical science a hegemony to which it is not entitled**. A science that has thus aspired out of its due place runs the risk of becoming not only a "wild Pallas from the brain" but, in connection with its use in war, "procuress to the Lords of Hell." Mr. Walter Lippmann seeks to persuade us in his Preface to *Morals* that **if one becomes "disinterested" after the fashion of the scientific investigator, one will have the equivalent not only of "humanism" but of "high religion."** Certain scientific investigators are busy in their laboratories at this very moment devising poison gases of formidable potency. What proof is there that, so far as the scientific type of **"disinterestedness"** is concerned, these gases will not be pressed into the service of the will to power?

p. 98 (Pt.3)

... Yet **the failure to exercise the will to refrain in some form or degree means spiritual anarchy**. A combination such as we are getting more and more at present of spiritual anarchy with an ever-increasing material efficiency—power without wisdom—is not likely to work either for the happiness of the individual or for the welfare of society....

...The **humanistic virtues—moderation, common sense, and common decency**—though much more accessible than those of the saint, still **go against the grain of the natural man**—terribly against the grain, one is forced to conclude from a cool survey of the facts of history.... The social dualism they have set up tends in its ultimate development to **substitute the class war for what Diderot termed in his denunciation of the older dualism the "civil war in the cave."**

p. 100 (Pt.4)

... [Modern man] seeks to escape from **mechanism by the pathway of romantic spontaneity**. This means practically that he is ready to surrender to the naturalistic flux in the hope of thus becoming **"creative."** Unfortunately this surrender involves a sacrifice of the standards and the conscious control that are needed to give to creation genuine human significance.

...

To have **standards** means practically to have some principle of unity with which to **measure** mere manifoldness and **change**. ... An inspection of all the facts of human experience, past and

present, would seem to show that what **unity** a man may achieve either within himself or with his fellow men must be based primarily, **not upon feeling, but upon an exercise of the higher will.**

p. 102 (Pt.5)

... **Discipline**, so far as it exists, is not of the humanistic or the religious type, but **of the kind that one gets in training for a vocation or a specialty.** The standards of a genuinely liberal education, as they have been understood, ... from the time of Aristotle, are being progressively undermined by the utilitarians and the sentimentalists. ... we are in danger of witnessing in this country one of the great cultural tragedies of the ages.

... Rousseauism not only dominates our education but has been eating into the very vitals of the Protestant religion. Practically, this means that **Protestantism is ceasing to be a religion of the inner life and is becoming more and more a religion of “uplift.”** The result of the attempt to deal with evil socially rather than at its source in the individual, **to substitute an outer for an inner control of appetite, has been a monstrous legalism, of which the Eighteenth Amendment is only the most notable example.** Those Protestants who have allied themselves with an organization like the Anti-Saloon League have been violating one of the most necessary of Christian precepts—that which warns against confounding the things of God with the things of Caesar.

The multiplication of laws, attended by a growing lawlessness—the present situation in this country—is, as every student of history knows, a very sinister symptom. It may mean that our democratic experiment is, like similar experiments in the past, **to end in a decadent imperialism.**

p.103

Though the **utilitarian-sentimental movement** may have triumphed more completely in America than elsewhere, it has been extending its conquests over the whole of the Occident and is now invading the Orient. The issues it raises are, in short, international. That the peripheral merits of this movement are almost innumerable I should be the first to admit: **indeed, almost everything in it seems plausible until one penetrates to its very center,** and then one discovers **an omission that unless corrected vitiates all the rest—the omission, namely, ... of any reference to a higher will or power of control.**

Whittaker Chambers, "Foreword in the Form of a Letter to My Children," 1952

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Much more than Alger Hiss or Whittaker Chambers was on trial in the trials of Alger Hiss. Two faiths were on trial. Human societies, like human beings, live by faith and die when faith dies. At issue in the Hiss Case was the question whether this sick society, which we call Western civilization, could in its extremity still cast up a man whose faith in it was so great that he would voluntarily abandon those things which men hold good, including life, to defend it. At issue was the question whether this man's faith could prevail against a man whose equal faith it was that this society is sick beyond saving, and that mercy itself pleads for its swift extinction and replacement by another. At issue was the question whether, in the desperately divided society, there still remained the will to recognize the issues in time to offset the immense rally of public power to distort and pervert the facts.

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[The Communist faith] is not new. It is, in fact, man's second oldest faith. Its promise was whispered in the first days of the Creation under the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil: "Ye shall be as gods." It is the great alternative faith of mankind. Like all great faiths, its force derives from a simple vision. Other ages have had great visions. They have always been different versions of the same vision: the vision of God and man's relationship to God. The Communist vision is the vision of Man without God.

...

It is the vision of man's mind displacing God as the creative intelligence of the world. It is the vision of man's liberated mind, by the sole force of its rational intelligence, redirecting man's destiny and reorganizing man's life and the world. It is the vision of man, once more the central figure of the Creation, not because God made man in His image, but because man's mind makes him the most intelligent of the animals. Copernicus and his successors displaced man as the central fact of the universe by proving that the earth was not the central star of the universe. Communism restores man to his sovereignty by the simple method of denying God.

...

The vision is a challenge and implies a threat. It challenges man to prove by his acts that he is the masterwork of the Creation – by making thought and act one. It challenges him to prove it by using the force of his rational mind to end the bloody meaninglessness of man's history – by giving it purpose and a plan. It challenges him to prove it by reducing the meaningless chaos of nature, by imposing on it his rational will to order, abundance, security, peace. It is the vision of materialism. But it threatens, if man's mind is unequal to the problems of man's progress, that he will sink back into savagery (the A and the H bombs have raised the issue in explosive forms), until nature replaces him with a more intelligent form of life.

132-133

My break [with Communism] began long before I heard those screams. Perhaps it does for everyone. I do not know how far back it began. Avalanches gather force and crash,

unheard, in men as in the mountains. But I date my break from a very casual happening. I was sitting in our apartment on St. Paul Street in Baltimore. It was shortly before we moved to Alger Hiss's apartment in Washington. My daughter was in her high chair. I was watching her eat. She was the most miraculous thing that had ever happened in my life. I liked to watch her even when she smeared porridge on her face or dropped it meditatively on the floor. My eye came to rest on the delicate convolutions of her ear — those intricate, perfect ears. The thought passed through my mind: "No, those ears were not created by any chance coming together of atoms in nature (the Communist view). They could have been created only by immense design." The thought was involuntary and unwanted. I crowded it out of my mind. But I never wholly forgot it or the occasion. I had to crowd it out of my mind. If I had completed it, I should have had to say: Design presupposes God. I did not then know that, at that moment, the finger of God was first laid upon my forehead.

Harry V. Jaffa, "On the Nature of Civil and Religious Liberty: Reflections on the Centennial of the Gettysburg Address," 1964

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The Union was created by its dedication to the equality of man. Slavery, Lincoln held, might be tolerated as a necessity, but only so long as it was understood to be a necessary evil. Douglas sought a middle position, a national "don't care" policy which would allow the settlers in the territories to decide as they wished in the matter of slavery. This, Lincoln said with scorn, attempted to treat as a matter of indifference something to which no human being could be indifferent. It was, he said, as vain as the search for a man who should be neither a living man nor a dead one. Lincoln preferred the candid pro-slavery argument, where the issue could be squarely joined. And he argued with unbreakable logic that if the slaveowners' interpretation of the Fifth Amendment were correct, and if the Negroes' humanity were either denied or treated as of no account, then the moral basis of the authority of the whole Constitution had to be called into question, and the American Revolution itself could be regarded as an expression of mere force without right.

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"All men are created equal," is called a self-evident truth. What does this mean? Not that all men are equal in intelligence, virtue, strength, or beauty. They are equal in certain "rights," and the meaning of these rights can perhaps be most easily expressed today in this negative way: there is no difference between man and man, such as there is between man and animals of other species, which makes any man, that is, any normal adult human being, the natural ruler of any man. Man is by nature the master of dog, horse, cow, or monkey. He is equally the master of the dangerous wild animals he cannot domesticate, because he can kill or capture them as a result of his natural superiority, and not because of mere accident. The rights which men evidently have over other animals, they do not, it is equally evident, have over each other. Men are not angels — who, it may be supposed, would require no government — nor are there angels to govern men. Government, which does not arise directly from nature, is then grounded upon consent. To repeat, government does not arise directly from nature, but

it does arise indirectly, to the extent that consent, to be the ground of legitimate authority, must itself be based upon a recognition of the essential difference between man and the brutes. If the consent of the governed were given to a regime which treated the rulers as if they were gods or angels, differing essentially in their nature from the ruled, the regime would also be illegitimate. Deception and force are equally incapable of giving rise to legitimate authority. Legitimacy cannot then be claimed for any regime in which the rulers treat the ruled as if they are animals of another species, as if the governed can be used as mere instruments for the advantage of the rulers. Such a regime is illegitimate, we repeat, even if the ruled, for whatever reason, believe that their own highest good consists in gratifying the rulers. The governed, in a civilized regime must, by the principles of our Declaration, be treated as beings with ends of intrinsic worth, which ends the government serves. Cattle may be killed, their flesh eaten, and their skins used to clothe human bodies, because of the indefeasible, objective natural difference between the soul of a man and the soul of a brute."

194-195

The Declaration, as we have seen, speaks of the specific nature of man and, inferentially, of its difference from other species, as self-evident. By this it is meant that we cannot demonstrate the essential likeness of men to each other and their difference from other animals. This is because all understanding of the world, all demonstration about the world, proceeds from the experience by which we grasp the terms of such propositions as: "This is a man, this is a dog, this is a tree, etc." A self-evident truth is not one which everyone necessarily admits to be true; it is one the evidence for which is contained in the terms of the proposition, and which is admitted to be true by everyone who already grasps the meaning of the terms. Very young children, lunatics, and savages, are for various reasons deficient in those operations of the mind which issue in the abstractions, man, dog, horse, tree, etc. Hence, until their deficiencies are somehow overcome, they cannot be responsible members of civil society.

...

The men who founded our system of government were not moral or political relativists, as those terms are understood today. In affirming that all men are created equal, they expressed their conviction that human freedom depends upon the recognition of an order that man himself does not create. Man is not free to disregard the hierarchy of souls in nature. The equality of man flows from and corresponds to the inequality of the human and the subhuman, as it corresponds also to the inequality of the human and the superhuman. ... To repeat, all our liberties rest upon the objective fact of the specific difference of the human soul from subhuman souls, and the highest virtue of this difference is the human capacity to confront the mystery of the universe. This is what we mean when we say that the Declaration of Independence affirms the principle of the dignity of man. To call this principle an ideology – which means a mere rationalization of vulgar self-interest – is to demean and debase it. To call it a mere "ideal" is perhaps even worse. An ideal is distinguished from what is real, and the Declaration speaks not of something unreal, but of something real in the highest degree, namely, truth. Moreover, there are many ideals, but there is but one truth. To be guided by the laws of Nature and of Nature's God means to be guided not by multiple fantasies but by the unitary ground of actual existence. Present-day skepticism as to the laws of nature

mentioned in the Declaration, does not supply us with an alternative ground for justifying civil liberty. Absolute skepticism is a self-devouring monster. Theoretically, it means doubting the ability to doubt. Practically, it teaches that if there is nothing that need be believed as true, neither is there anything that need be disbelieved. Unlimited skepticism quickly transforms itself into unlimited dogmatism. Political freedom exists only upon that wise and tolerant middle ground where men do not treat other men as brutes because they know that they themselves are not gods. But this restraint, this proud humility, is the attribute of those, and only those, who see in the order of nature the ground of the moral and political order.

[Part 2] Harry V. Jaffa, "On the Nature of Civil and Religious Liberty: Reflections on the Centennial of the Gettysburg Address," 1964

194–196 (review)

The Declaration [of Independence] ... speaks of the specific nature of man and, inferentially, of its difference from other species, as self-evident. By this it is meant that we cannot demonstrate the essential likeness of men to each other and their difference from other animals. This is because all understanding of the world, all demonstration about the world, proceeds from the experience by which we grasp the terms of such propositions as: "This is a man, this is a dog, this is a tree, etc." **A self-evident truth is not one which everyone necessarily admits to be true; it is one the evidence for which is contained in the terms of the proposition, and which is admitted to be true by everyone who already grasps the meaning of the terms.** Very young children, lunatics, and savages, are for various reasons deficient in those operations of the mind which issue in the abstractions, man, dog, horse, tree, etc. Hence, until their deficiencies are somehow overcome, they cannot be responsible members of civil society.

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Freedom of thought was indeed an absolute for Jefferson. "The error seems not sufficiently eradicated, that the operations of the mind, as well as the acts of the body, are subject to the coercion of the laws," he also wrote in Query XVII. "The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." **With the purely theoretical question of whether there is no God or twenty, Jefferson says government has no rightful business. But on the practical aspect of the question of whether the mind has a right to entertain such questions, and whether men must be left free by government to entertain them, there was no place in Jefferson's thinking for any neutrality.** The error that the mind is not inherently free to speculate, is an error which, Jefferson says, seems not to be "sufficiently eradicated." To deny the power and right of the soul to confront the universe is a denial of human nature. Marxism, for example, by teaching that all opinions on the relation of man to God and to nature are nothing but ideology, that is, devices whereby the mind justifies and thereby co-operates in particular ways of relieving the demands of the body, treats the distinction between body and mind as essentially insignificant. It is no accident that every government professing Marxism therefore attempts to coerce the operations of the mind as well as those of the body. One cannot be equally tolerant then, and certainly Jefferson was not, of opinions destructive, and of opinions not destructive, of the regime of liberty itself. The sphere comprehended by what Jefferson called religious opinions, was essentially the sphere of theory.

203-204

As the crisis of the Civil War approached, many frenzied efforts were made to placate Southern opinion. In 1860, in the wake of John Brown's raid, Senator Douglas of Illinois proposed a sedition law to punish abolitionist propaganda as an incitement to crime. In the Cooper Union speech, Lincoln argued against any such legislation. But he never even suggested that it would be wrong to pass such a law because it violated freedom of speech or of the press. "If slavery is right," said Lincoln, "all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it, are themselves wrong, and should be silenced, and swept away . . . All they ask, we could readily grant, if we thought slavery right; all we ask, they could as readily grant, if they thought it wrong. Their thinking it right, and our thinking it wrong, is the precise fact upon which depends the whole controversy." Freedom of speech was logically subordinate to personal freedom, because a man who was a slave could not demand the right to speak. Lincoln argued over and over, with a logic which no one can now deny, that there was no principle by which the enslavement of Negroes could be justified, which could not also justify the enslavement of white men. The sheet-anchor of our liberties was not the Constitution but the principle of the Declaration of Independence, which alone gave life and meaning to the Constitution. **To say that the Constitution protects the right to deny that all men are created equal, is as much as to say that it protects the right to deny any obligations to obey its law.**

Joan Didion, "The Women's Movement," 1972

206-207

Marxism in this country had ever been an eccentric and quixotic passion. One oppressed class after another had seemed finally to miss the point. The have-nots, it turned out, aspired mainly to having. The minorities seemed to promise more, but finally disappointed: **it developed that they actually cared about the issues, that they tended to see the integration of the luncheonette and the seat in the front of the bus as real goals, and only rarely as ploys, counters in a larger game.** They resisted that essential inductive leap from the immediate reform to the social ideal, and, just as disappointingly, they failed to perceive their common cause with other minorities, continued to exhibit a self-interest disconcerting in the extreme to organizers steeped in the rhetoric of "brotherhood."

...

And then, at that exact dispirited moment when there seemed no one at all willing to play the proletariat, along came the women's movement, and the invention of women as a "class." ... To read the theorists of the women's movement was to think not of Mary Wollstonecraft but of Margaret Fuller at her most high-minded, of rushing position papers off to mimeo and drinking tea from paper cups in lieu of eating lunch; of thin raincoats on bitter nights. If the family was the last fortress of capitalism, then let us abolish the family. **If the necessity for conventional reproduction of the species seemed unfair to women, then let us transcend, via technology, "the very organization of nature," the oppression, as Shulamith Firestone saw it, "that goes back through recorded history to the animal kingdom itself."** *I accept the universe,* Margaret Fuller had finally allowed: Shulamith Firestone did not.

209-210

More and more, as the literature of the movement began to reflect the thinking of women who did not really understand the movement's ideological base, one had the sense of this stall, this delusion, the sense that the drilling of the theorists had struck only some psychic hardpan dense with superstitions and little sophistries, wish fulfillment, self-loathing and bitter fancies. **To read even desultorily in this literature was to recognize instantly a certain dolorous phantasm, an imagined Everywoman with whom the authors seemed to identify all too entirely.** This ubiquitous construct was everyone's victim but her own.

...

The half-truths, repeated, authenticated themselves. The bitter fancies assumed their own logic. To ask the obvious — why she did not get herself another gynecologist, another job, why she did not get out of bed and turn off the television set, or why, the most eccentric detail, she stayed in hotels where only doughnuts could be obtained from room service — was to join this argument at its own spooky level, a level which had only the most tenuous and unfortunate relationship to the actual condition of being a woman. That many women are victims of condescension and exploitation and sex-role stereotyping was scarcely news, but neither was it news that other women are not: nobody forces women to buy the package.

210–211

Just as one had gotten the unintended but inescapable suggestion, when told about the “terror and revulsion” experienced by women in the vicinity of construction sites, of creatures too “tender” for the abrasiveness of daily life, too fragile for the streets, so now one was getting, in the later literature of the movement, the impression of women too “sensitive” for the difficulties of adult life, women unequipped for reality and grasping at the movement as a rationale for denying that reality. The transient stab of dread and “loss which accompanies menstruation simply never happens: we only thought it happened, because a male-chauvinist psychiatrist told us so. No woman need have bad dreams after an abortion: she has only been told she should. The power of sex is just an oppressive myth, no longer to be feared, because what the sexual connection really amounts to, we learn in one woman’s account of a postmarital affair presented as liberated and liberating, is “wisecracking and laughing” and “lying together and then leaping up to play and sing the entire *Sesame Street Songbook*.” **All one’s actual apprehension of what it is like to be a woman, the irreconcilable difference of it – that sense of living one’s deepest life underwater, that dark involvement with blood and birth and death – could now be declared invalid, unnecessary, one never felt it at all.**

...

“One was only told it, and now one is to be reprogrammed, fixed up, rendered again as inviolate and unstained as the “modern” little girls in the Tampax advertisements. More and more we have been hearing the wishful voices of just such perpetual adolescents, the voices of women scarred not by their class position as women but by the failure of their childhood expectations and misapprehensions.

“Our Ignorance”

[These] words ... are the distillations of great questions that must be faced if one is to live a serious life: reason-revelation, freedom-necessity, democracy-aristocracy, good-evil, body-soul, self-other, city-man, eternity-time, being-nothing. Our condition of doubt makes us aware of alternatives but has not until recently given us the means to resolve our doubt about the primacy of any of the alternatives. A serious life means being fully aware of the alternatives, thinking about them with all the intensity one brings to bear on life-and-death questions.

In a free society where people are free—responsible—who can consistently not be “pro-choice”? However, when the word still had some shape and consistency, a difficult choice meant to accept difficult consequences in the form of suffering, disapproval of others, ostracism, punishment and guilt. Without this, choice was believed to have no significance. ... Now, when we speak of the right to choice, we mean that there are no necessary consequences, that disapproval is only prejudice and guilt only a neurosis. Political activism and psychiatry can handle it. ... America has no-fault automobile accidents, no-fault divorces, and it is moving with the aid of modern philosophy toward no-fault choices. (209–210)

Man has always had to come to terms with God, love and death. They made it impossible to be perfectly at home on earth. But America is coming to terms with them in new ways. God was slowly executed here; it took two hundred years, but local theologians tell us He is now dead. His place has been taken by the sacred. Love was put to death by psychologists. Its place has been taken by sex and meaningful relationships. That has taken only about seventy-five years. It should not be surprising that a new science, thanatology, or death with dignity, is on the way to putting death to death. Coming to terms with the terror of death ... will no longer be necessary. For death isn't what it used to be. What will take its place is not yet clear. ... On Sunday mornings educated men used to be harangued about death and eternity, made to give them a bit of attention. This is not a danger to be run in doing battle with the Sunday *New York Times*. Forgetting, in a variety of subtle forms, is one of our primary modes of problem-solving. We are learning to “feel comfortable” with God, love, and even death. (211)

In America, especially, there is always a need for moral justification. Life-style—an expression that came out of the same school of thought as sublimation and was actually understood to be the product of sublimation, but had never been associated with it in America because of the division of labor that had Freud specializing in sublimation and Weber in life-style—turned out to be a godsend. “Life-style” justifies any way of life, as does “value” any opinion. It does away with the natural structure of the world, which is only raw material for the stylist's artistic hand. The very expression makes all moralisms and naturalisms stop short at the limit of the sacred ground, aware of their limits and respectful of creativity. Moreover, with our curious mixture of traditions, life-styles are accorded rights, so defense of them is a moral cause, justifying the sweet passions of indignation at the violators of human rights, against whom these tastes, before they became life-styles, were so politically and psychologically defenseless. Now they can call upon all the lovers of human rights throughout the world to join in their defense, for the threat to any group's rights is a threat to them all. ... In the past there was a respectable place for marginality, bohemia. But it had to justify its unorthodox practices by its intellectual and artistic achievement. Life-style is so much freer, easier, more authentic and democratic. No attention has to be paid to content. (215)

Life-style was first popularized here to describe and make acceptable the lives of people who do attractive things that are frowned upon by society. It was identical to counterculture. Two great expressions in the American usage, draped in the authority lent by their philosophic genealogy, provided moral warrant for people to live exactly as they please. ... What actually goes on in a counterculture or a life-style—whether it is ennobling or debasing—makes no difference. ... What begins in a search if not precisely for selfish pleasure then at least for avoidance of and release from suffering or distress, transmogrified into a life-style and a right, becomes the ground of moral superiority. The comfortable, unconstrained life is morality.

Self-serving is expressed as, and really believed to be, disinterested principle. When one looks at the earnest, middle-class proponents of birth control, abortion and easy divorce ... one cannot help thinking that all this serves them very well. This is not to deny the reality of the problems presented by too many children for the poor, the terrible consequences of rapes and battered wives. However, none of those problems really belongs to the middle classes, who are not reproducing themselves, are rarely raped or battered, but who are the best-rewarded beneficiaries of what they themselves propose. If one of their proposals entailed a sacrifice of freedom or pleasure for them or their class, they would be more morally plausible. As it is, all their proposals contribute to their own

capacity to choose, in the contemporary sense of choice. Motives that could easily be so flawed should not be, but are, the basis for moral smugness. In this case, as in so many others, making sexual relations easy becomes identical to morality. I fear that the most self-righteous of Americans nowadays are precisely those who have most to gain from what they preach. (215–216)

Freud and Plato agree about the pervasiveness of eroticism in everything human. But there the similarity ends. Anyone who wished to lay aside his assurance about the superiority of modern psychology might find in Plato a richer explanation of the diversity of erotic expression, which so baffles us and has driven us to our present nonsense. He would see there a rewarding articulation of the possibilities and impossibilities of the fulfillment of erotic desires. Plato both enchants and disenchants eros, and we need both. ... Eros is an obsession, but there is no thought about it, and no possibility of thought about it, because we now take what were only interpretations of our souls to be facts about them. Eros gradually becomes meaningless and low; and there is nothing good for man which is not informed by thought and affirmed by real choice, which means choice instructed by deliberation. Saul Bellow has described his own intention as “the rediscovery of the magic of the world under the debris of modern ideas.” That gray net of abstraction, used to cover the world in order to simplify and explain it in a way that is pleasing to us, has become the world in our eyes. The only way to see the phenomena, rather than sterile distillations of them, to experience them in their ambiguity again, would be to have available alternate visions, a diversity of profound opinions. But our ideas have made it difficult to have such experiences in practice, and impossible in theory. (217)

“Here Comes the Groom”

Marriage provides an anchor, if an arbitrary and weak one, in the chaos of sex and relationships to which we are all prone. It provides a mechanism for emotional stability, economic security, and the healthy rearing of the next generation. We rig the law in its favor not because we disparage all forms of relationship other than the nuclear family, but because we recognize that not to promote marriage would be to ask too much of human virtue. In the context of the weakened family’s effect upon the poor, it might also invite social disintegration. One of the worst products of the New Right’s “family values” campaign is that its extremism and hatred of diversity has disguised this more measured and more convincing case for the importance of the marital bond.

The concept of domestic partnership ignores these concerns, indeed directly attacks them; this is a pity, since one of its most important objectives—providing some civil recognition for gay relationships—is a noble cause and one completely compatible with the defense of the family. But the way to go about it is not to undermine straight marriage; it is to legalize old-style marriage for gays. (222–223)

The argument that gay marriage would subtly undermine the unique legitimacy of straight marriage is based upon a fallacy. For heterosexuals, straight marriage would remain the most significant—and only legal—social bond. Gay marriage could only delegitimize straight marriage if it were a real alternative to it, and this is clearly not true. To put it bluntly, there’s precious little evidence that straights could be persuaded by any law to have sex with—let alone marry—someone of their own sex. The only possible effect of this sort would be to persuade gay men and women who force themselves into heterosexual marriage (often at appalling cost to themselves and their families) to find a focus for their family instincts in a more personally positive environment. But this is clearly a plus, not a minus: Gay marriage could both avoid a lot of tortured families and create the possibility for many happier ones. It is not, in short, a denial of family values. It’s an extension of them.

Of course, some would claim that any legal recognition of homosexuality is a de facto attack upon heterosexuality. But even the most hardened conservatives recognize that gays are a permanent minority and aren’t likely to go away. Since persecution is not an option in a civilized society, why not coax gays into traditional values rather than rail incoherently against them? (224)

There’s a less elaborate argument for gay marriage: It’s good for gays. It provides role models for young gay people who, after the exhilaration of coming out, can easily lapse into short-term relationships and insecurity with no tangible goal in sight. ... It could bring the essence of gay life—a gay couple—into the heart of the traditional straight family in a way the family can most understand and the gay offspring can most easily acknowledge. It could do as much to heal the gay-straight rift as any amount of gay rights legislation.

If these arguments sound socially conservative, that's no accident. It's one of the richest ironies of our society's blind spot toward gays that essentially conservative social goals should have the appearance of being so radical. But gay marriage is not a radical step. It avoids the mess of domestic partnership; it is humane; it is conservative in the best sense of the word. It's also practical. Given the fact that we already allow legal gay relationships, what possible social goal is advanced by framing the law to encourage these relationships to be unfaithful, undeveloped, and insecure? (224–225)

Affirmative Action: The Price of Preference | Shelby Steele

[Since the 1960s, affirmative action] underwent a remarkable escalation of its mission from simple anti-discrimination enforcement to social engineering by means of quotas, goals, timetables, set-asides and other forms of preferential treatment.

Legally, this was achieved through a series of executive orders and EEOC guidelines that allowed racial imbalances in the workplace to stand as proof of racial discrimination. Once it could be assumed that discrimination explained racial imbalances, it became easy to justify group remedies to presumed discrimination, rather than the normal case-by-case redress for proven discrimination. Preferential treatment through quotas, goals, and so on is designed to correct imbalances based on the assumption that they always indicate discrimination. This expansion of what constitutes discrimination allowed affirmative action to escalate into the business of social engineering in the name of anti-discrimination, to push society toward statistically proportionate racial representation, without any obligation of proving actual discrimination.

[The] essential problem with this form of affirmative action is the way it leaps over the hard business of developing a formerly oppressed people to the point where they can achieve proportionate representation on their own (given equal opportunity) and goes straight for the proportionate representation. (235–236)

When affirmative action escalated into social engineering, diversity became a golden word. It grants whites an egalitarian fairness ... and blacks an entitlement to proportionate representation. *Diversity* is a term that applies democratic principles to races and cultures rather than to citizens, despite the fact that there is nothing to indicate that real diversity is the same thing as proportionate representation. Too often the result of this on campuses (for example) has been a democracy of colors rather than of people, an artificial diversity that gives the appearance of an educational parity between black and white students that has not yet been achieved in reality. Here again, racial preferences allow society to leapfrog over the difficult problem of developing blacks to parity with whites and into a cosmetic diversity that covers the blemish of disparity. (236)

I believe affirmative action is problematic in our society because it tries to function like a social program. Rather than ask it to ensure equal opportunity we have demanded that it create parity between the races. But preferential treatment does not teach skills, or educate, or instill motivation. It only passes out entitlement by color, a situation that in my profession has created an unrealistically high demand for black professors. The social engineer's assumption is that this high demand will inspire more blacks to earn Ph.D.'s and join the profession. In fact, the number of blacks earning Ph.D.'s has declined in recent years. A Ph.D. must be developed from preschool on. He requires family and community support. He must acquire an entire system of values that enables him to work hard while delaying gratification. There are social programs, I believe, that can (and should) help blacks *develop* in all these areas, but entitlement by color is not a social program; it is a dubious reward for being black. (240)

But if not preferences, then what? I think we need social policies that are committed to two goals: the educational and economic development of disadvantaged people, regardless of race, and the eradication from our society—through close monitoring and severe sanctions—of racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination. Preferences will not deliver us to either of these goals, since they tend to benefit those who are not disadvantaged—middle-class white women and middle-class blacks—and attack one form of discrimination with another. Preferences are inexpensive and carry the glamour of good intentions—change the numbers and the good deed is done. To be against them is to be unkind. But I think the unkindest cut is to bestow on children like my own an undeserved advantage while neglecting the development of those disadvantaged children on the East Side of my city who will likely never be in a position to benefit from a preference. Give my children fairness; give disadvantaged children a better shot at development—better elementary and secondary schools, job training, safer neighborhoods, better financial assistance for college, and so on. (242)

Michael Novak, from *The Catholic Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1993

262–263

[Lionel] Trilling's is the classic text identifying a specific "adversary culture" within U.S. culture, a culture that now governs the mainstream in the universities, the magazines, movies, and television. Coincident with its rise is the gradual collapse of the prestige of scientific and technical elites, and even of the idea of progress. This adversary culture celebrates the antibourgeois virtues. By its own innermost intention, it defines itself against the common culture. It has increasingly lost its connection with ordinary people, whom it is inclined to scorn. They are religious, but the adversary culture is not. More than 100 million Americans attend church or synagogue every weekend, but the so-called popular culture of Hollywood and television is ignorant of this powerful vein of popular life.

...

Indeed, the hardest part of the moral task we now face is the immense power of that adversary culture. To oppose that power is to risk excommunication from the mainstream. Nonetheless, as Trilling (who loved modernist works) was compelled by intellectual honesty to state, the intention of the modernist project is to subvert the classic Jewish, Christian, and natural (as well as "bourgeois") virtues. It is to perform a massive transvaluation of values, to turn the moral world upside down. It is to insinuate that what Jews and Christians have for centuries called sin is actually a high form of liberation, and that what for centuries Jews and Christians have thought to be virtuous is actually vicious. It is to hate what Jews and Christians love, and to love what Jews and Christians hate.

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Most citizens of the world seek the three basic institutional liberations of human life: a free polity, a free economy, and a free moral-cultural system. This is seldom today a matter of ideology; it has arisen from harsh lessons of trial and error. One cannot speak of these three liberations without also speaking of institutions. And one can hardly speak of institutions without speaking of the moral virtues that sustain them.

...

For human rights are not protected by words on parchment. They are protected by habits, free associations, and independent judicial institutions. Moreover, the institutions that protect human rights do not coerce conscience, or force citizens to develop their individual moral and spiritual capacities. Those institutions create space for those achievements—but do not automatically produce them. Thus, the mere achievement of the basic institutions of political and economic liberty will not itself fulfill human moral and spiritual longing. Politics and economics are not enough. That is why the next frontier for those who think counterculturally concerns the moral and spiritual dimension of culture.

...

In this task, the institutions of the mass media—the much-vaunted "entertainment industry"—incur very high responsibilities, which they have barely begun to face. They, too, must be held to account. Because their influence upon the moral air we breathe and on the moral ecology we inhabit is vast, the prospects of the free society, and the virtues proper to ordered liberty, depend on their performance. The moral nobility of their task is far greater than they seem yet to recognize.

“Leadership Failure and the Loyalty Trap” Glenn Loury 1995

“We have embraced a false, enervating conception of racial loyalty. While it avoids giving aid and comfort to the enemy (that is, to the “white man”), it requires that we ignore the dictates of our forebears’ traditions and deepest values. Seduced by the moral relativism that emerged triumphant in the 1960s, we blacks in the best position to do so now find ourselves without the will or self-confidence to provide direction and set standards for our people. We have lapsed into the absurd posture of identifying true commitment to the cause with being uncritical of a person’s deeds, however despicable, if that person is black. We act as if the historical fact of slavery and the associated culpability of America have endowed blacks with a fully paid insurance policy excusing whatever behavior ensues. Every personal failing of a black, even the illegal behavior of corrupt politicians, becomes evidence of the racism of whites. And every black individual who succeeds by dint of hard work and self-sacrifice is an exception to the rule that pervasive white racism precludes the possibility of black progress.”

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On the Atlanta murders, Farrakhan’s speech, “the subway vigilante”, Timothy the dad...

“These examples serve to illustrate the contemporary crisis in black intellectual and political leadership. I have had quite enough of the timidity, wrongheadedness and moral relativism that characterizes so much of the commentary of contemporary black elites on the racial issues of our day. The time has come to break ranks with them. These elites are caught in a “loyalty trap.” They are fearful of engaging in a candid, critical appraisal of the condition of our people because they do not want to appear to be disloyal to the race. But this rhetorical reticence has serious negative consequences for the ability of blacks as a group to grapple with the real problems that confront us. Moreover, it represents a failure of nerve in the face of adversity that may be more accurately characterized as intellectual treason than racial fealty. After all, what more important obligation can the privileged class of black elites have than to tell the truth to their own people?

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The unexamined premise that history can be compared with the individual's growth from childhood to maturity—the point of reference that Jung shared with Freud and Weber, indeed with most of those who speculate about such issues—made it possible to condemn any form of cultural conservatism, any respect for tradition, as an expression of the natural tendency to resist emotional and intellectual growth, to cling instead to the security of childhood. “Only the man who has outgrown the stages of consciousness belonging to the past . . . can achieve a full consciousness of the present.”

Or consider the varieties of religious experience analyzed by William James in his book of that name, one of the few books about the spiritual crisis of modernity (if that, in fact, is its subject) that has stood the test of time, in part—strange to say—because of its complete indifference to issues of historical chronology. To readers formed by the self-consciously modern tradition I have been referring to, this indifference to chronology might appear to be a weakness of James's book, but that is precisely his point: that the deepest variety of religious faith (the “twice-born type,” as he calls it) always, in every age, arises out of a background of despair. Religious faith asserts the goodness of being in the face of suffering and evil. Black despair and alienation—which have their origin not in perceptions exclusively modern but in the bitterness always felt toward a God who allows evil and suffering to flourish—often become the prelude to conversion. An awareness of “radical evil” underlies the spiritual intoxication that finally comes with “yielding” and “self-surrender.” The experience of the twice-born, according to James, is more painful but emotionally deeper than that of the “healthy-minded” because it is informed by the “iron of melancholy.” Having no awareness of evil, the once-born type of religious experience cannot stand up to adversity. It offers sustenance only so long as it does not encounter “poisonous humiliations.” “A little cooling down of animal excitability and instinct, a little loss of animal toughness, will bring the worm at the core of all our usual springs of delight into full view, and turn us into melancholy metaphysicians.” When that happens, we need a more rugged form of faith, one that recognizes that “life and its negation are beaten up inextricably together” and that “all natural happiness thus seems infected with a contradiction.” If nothing else, the shadow of death hangs over our pleasures and triumphs, calling them into question. “Back of everything is the great spectre of universal death, the all-encompassing blackness.”

Edwards's view of God bears no resemblance to the benign father figure conjured up by childlike human beings, according to Freud, out of their unconscious need for dependence. Edwards's God is “absolutely perfect, and infinitely wise, and the fountain of all wisdom,” and it is therefore “meet . . . that he should make himself his end, and that he should make nothing but his own wisdom his rule in pursuing that end, without asking leave or counsel of any.” Freud, like Krutch, assumes that religion answers to the need for dependence, whereas Edwards speaks directly to those who proudly deny any such need—indeed, who find it galling to be reminded of their dependence on a power beyond their own control or at least beyond the control of humanity in general. Such people find it difficult to acknowledge the justice and goodness of this higher power when the world is so obviously full of evil. They find it difficult to reconcile their expectations of worldly success and happiness, so often undone by events, with the idea of a just, loving, and all-powerful creator. Unable to conceive of a God who does not regard human

happiness as the be-all and end-all of creation, they cannot accept the central paradox of religious faith: that the secret of happiness lies in renouncing the right to be happy.

What makes the modern temper modern, then, is not that we have lost our childish sense of dependence but that the normal rebellion against dependence is more pervasive than it used to be. This rebellion is not new, as Flannery O'Connor reminds us when she observes that "there are long periods in the lives of all of us . . . when the truth as revealed by faith is hideous, emotionally disturbing, downright repulsive. Witness the dark night of the soul in individual saints." If the whole world now seems to be going through a dark night of the soul, it is because the normal rebellion against dependence appears to be sanctioned by our scientific control over nature, the same progress of science that has allegedly destroyed religious superstition.

Randolph Bourne, from *The State*, 1918

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With the shock of war...the State comes into its own again. The Government, with no mandate from the people, without consultation of the people, conducts all the negotiations, the backing and filling, the menaces and explanations, which slowly bring it into collision with some other Government, and gently and irresistibly slides the country into war. For the benefit of proud and haughty citizens, it is fortified with a list of the intolerable insults which have been hurled towards us by the other nations; for the benefit of the liberal and beneficent, it has a convincing set of moral purposes which our going to war will achieve; for the ambitious and aggressive classes, it can gently whisper of a bigger rôle in the destiny of the world. The result is that, even in those countries where the business of declaring war is theoretically in the hands of representatives of the people, no legislature has ever been known to decline the request of an Executive, which has conducted all foreign affairs in utter privacy and irresponsibility, that it order the nation into battle. Good democrats are wont to feel the crucial difference between a State in which the popular Parliament or Congress declares war, and the State in which an absolute monarch or ruling class declares war. But, put to the stern pragmatic test, the difference is not striking. In the freest of republics as well as in the most tyrannical of Empires, all foreign policy, the diplomatic negotiations which produce or forestall war, are equally the private property of the Executive part of the Government, and are equally exposed to no check whatever from popular bodies, or the people voting as a mass themselves.

...

The moment war is declared, however, the mass of the people, through some spiritual alchemy, become convinced that they have willed and executed the deed themselves.

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War becomes almost a sport between the hunters and the hunted. The pursuit of enemies within outweighs in psychic attractiveness the assault on the enemy without. The whole terrific force of the State is brought to bear against the heretics. The nation boils with a slow insistent fever. A white terrorism is carried on by the Government against pacifists, Socialists, enemy aliens, and a milder unofficial persecution against all persons or movements that can be imagined as connected with the enemy. War, which should be the health of the State, unifies all the bourgeois elements and the common people, and outlaws the rest. The revolutionary proletariat shows more resistance to this unification, is, as we have seen, psychically out of the current. Its vanguard, as the I. W. W., is remorselessly pursued, in spite of the proof that it is a symptom, not a cause, and its prosecution increases the disaffection of labor and intensifies the friction instead of lessening it.

...

The significant classes must have their pleasure in hunting down and chastizing everything that they feel instinctively to be not imbued with the current State-enthusiasm, though the State itself be actually impeded in its efforts to carry out those objects for which they are passionately contending. The best proof of this is that with a pursuit of plotters that has continued with ceaseless vigilance ever since the beginning of the war in Europe, the concrete crimes unearthed and punished have been fewer than those prosecutions for the mere crime of opinion or the expression of sentiments critical of the State or the "national policy. The punishment for opinion has been far more ferocious and unintermittent than the punishment of pragmatic crime. Unimpeachable Anglo-Saxon Americans who were freer of pacifist or socialist utterance than the State-obsessed ruling public opinion, received heavier penalties and even greater opprobrium, in many instances, than the definitely hostile German plotter. A public opinion

which, almost without protest, accepts as just, adequate, beautiful, deserved and in fitting harmony with ideals of liberty and freedom of speech, a sentence of twenty years in prison for mere utterances, no matter what they may be, shows itself to be suffering from a kind of social derangement of values, a sort of social neurosis, that deserves analysis and comprehension.

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It cannot be too firmly realized that war is a function of States and not of nations, indeed that it is the chief function of States. War is a very artificial thing. It is not the naïve spontaneous outburst of herd pugnacity; it is no more primary than is formal religion. War cannot exist without a military establishment, and a military establishment cannot exist without a State organization. War has an immemorial tradition and heredity only because the State has a long tradition and heredity. But they are inseparably and functionally joined. We cannot crusade against war without crusading implicitly against the State. And we cannot expect, or take measures to ensure, that this war is a war to end war, unless at the same time we take measures to end the State in its traditional form. The State is not the nation, and the State can be modified and even abolished in its present form, without harming the nation. On the contrary, with the passing of the dominance of the State, the genuine life-enhancing forces of the nation will be liberated. If the State's chief function is war, then the State must suck out of the nation a large part of its energy for its purely sterile purposes of defense and aggression. It devotes to waste or to actual destruction as much as it can of the vitality of the nation. No one will deny that war is a vast complex of life-destroying and life-crippling forces. If the State's chief function is war, then it is chiefly concerned with coördinating and developing the powers and techniques which make for destruction. And this means not only the actual and potential destruction of the enemy, but of the nation at home as well. For the very existence of a State in a system of States means that the nation lies always under a risk of war and invasion, and the calling away of energy into military pursuits means a crippling of the productive and life-enhancing processes of the national life.

“[R]egulation of domestic relations is an area that has long been regarded as a virtually exclusive province of the States.”[10]

“[T]he Federal Government, through our history, has deferred to state-law policy decisions with respect to domestic relations.”[11]

But we need not speculate. When the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868, every State limited marriage to one man and one woman, and no one doubted the constitutionality of doing so. That resolves these cases. When it comes to determining the meaning of a vague constitutional provision—such as “due process of law” or “equal protection of the laws”—it is unquestionable that the People who ratified that provision did not understand it to prohibit a practice that remained both universal and uncontroversial in the years after ratification.[12] We have no basis for striking down a practice that is not expressly prohibited by the Fourteenth Amendment’s text, and that bears the endorsement of a long tradition of open, widespread, and unchallenged use dating back to the Amendment’s ratification. Since there is no doubt whatever that the People never decided to prohibit the limitation of marriage to opposite-sex couples, the public debate over same-sex marriage must be allowed to continue.

—

But no. What logically follows, in the majority’s judge-empowering estimation, is: “and so they entrusted to future generations a charter protecting the right of all persons to enjoy liberty as we learn its meaning.”[15] The “we,” needless to say, is the nine of us. “History and tradition guide and discipline [our] inquiry but do not set its outer boundaries.”[16] Thus, rather than focusing on the People’s understanding of “liberty”—at the time of ratification or even today—the majority focuses on four “principles and traditions” that, in the majority’s view, prohibit States from defining marriage as an institution consisting of one man and one woman.[17]

This is a naked judicial claim to legislative—indeed, super-legislative—power; a claim fundamentally at odds with our system of government. Except as limited by a constitutional prohibition agreed to by the People, the States are free to adopt whatever laws they like, even those that offend the esteemed Justices’ “reasoned judgment.” A system of government that makes the People subordinate to a committee of nine unelected lawyers does not deserve to be called a democracy.

...

But what really astounds is the hubris reflected in today’s judicial Putsch. The five Justices who compose today’s majority are entirely comfortable concluding that every State violated the Constitution for all of the 135 years between the Fourteenth Amendment’s ratification and Massachusetts’ permitting of same-sex marriages in 2003.[20] They have discovered in the Fourteenth Amendment a “fundamental right” overlooked by every person alive at the time of ratification, and almost everyone else in the time since. They are

QUOTE 1: Page 337

“IN THE United States at the present time, the principal indexes of the increase of State power are three in number. First, the point to which the centralization of State authority has been carried. Practically all the sovereign rights and powers of the smaller political units—all of them that are significant enough to be worth absorbing—have been absorbed by the federal unit; nor is this all. State power has not only been thus concentrated at Washington, but it has been so far concentrated into the hands of the Executive that the existing regime is a regime of personal government. It is nominally republican, but actually monocratic; a curious anomaly, but highly characteristic of a people little gifted with intellectual integrity.”

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Our national legislature was not suppressed by force of arms, like the French Assembly in 1851, but was bought out of its functions with public money; the corresponding functions in the smaller units were reduced under the personal control of the Executive. ...

A second index is supplied by the prodigious extension of the bureaucratic principle that is now observable. This is attested prima facie by the number of new boards, bureaux and commissions set up at Washington in the last two years.

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A third index is seen in the erection of poverty and mendicancy into a permanent political asset. Two years ago, many of our people were in hard straits; to some extent, no doubt, through no fault of their own, though it is now clear that in the popular view of their case, as well as in the political view, the line between the deserving poor and the undeserving poor was not distinctly drawn. Popular feeling ran high at the time, and the prevailing wretchedness was regarded with indiscriminating emotion, as evidence of some general wrong done upon its victims by society at large, rather than as the natural penalty of greed, folly or actual misdoings; which in large part it was. The State, always instinctively “turning every contingency into a resource” for accelerating the conversion of **social power** into State power, was quick to take advantage of this state of mind. All that was needed to organize these unfortunates into an invaluable political property was to declare the doctrine that the State owes all its citizens a living, and this was accordingly done. It immediately precipitated an enormous mass of subsidized voting-power, an enormous resource for strengthening the State at the expense of society.⁴

QUOTE 2: Page 340 STATE POWER DOES NOT DIMINISH

Any essential change (retreat of State power) would be quite unhistorical, quite without precedent, and is therefore most unlikely; and by any essential change, I mean one that will tend to redistribute actual power between the State and society.⁵ ... (cites Supreme Court striking National Recovery Act)

... For example, we shall no doubt shortly see the great pressure-group of politically-organized poverty and mendicancy subsidized indirectly instead of directly, because State interest can not long keep pace with the hand-over-head disposition of the masses to loot their own Treasury.

Our nominally republican system is actually built on an imperial model, with our professional politicians standing in the place of the praetorian guards; they meet from time to time, decide what can be “got away with,” and how, and who is to do it; and the electorate votes according to their prescriptions. Under these conditions it is easy to provide the appearance of any desired concession of State power, without the reality; our history shows innumerable instances of very easy dealing with problems in practical politics much more difficult than that. One may remark in this connexion also the notoriously baseless assumption that party-designations connote principles, and that party-pledges imply performance. Moreover, underlying these assumptions and all others that faith in “political action” contemplates, is the assumption that the interests of the State and the interests of society are, at least theoretically, identical; whereas in theory they are directly opposed, and this opposition invariably declares itself in practice to the precise extent that circumstances permit.

QUOTE 3: P342

When Hitler and Mussolini invoke a kind of debased and hoodwinking mysticism to aid their acceleration of this process, the student at once recognizes his old friend, the formula of Hegel, that “the State incarnates the Divine Idea upon earth,” and he is not hoodwinked. The journalist and the impressionable traveler may make what they will of “the new religion of Bolshevism;” the student contents himself with remarking clearly the exact nature of the process which this inculcation is designed to sanction.

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When Hegel’s doctrine of the State, for example, is restated in terms by Hitler and Mussolini, it is distinctly offensive to us, and we congratulate ourselves on our freedom from the “yoke of a dictator’s tyranny.” No American politician would dream of breaking in on our routine of litanies with anything of the kind. ... Suppose Mr. Roosevelt should defend his regime by publicly reasserting Hegel’s dictum that “the State alone possesses rights, because it is the strongest.” One can hardly imagine that our public would get that down without a great deal of retching. Yet how far, really, is that doctrine alien to our public’s actual acquiescences? Surely not far.

QUOTE 4: Page 346

The present generation does not speak in quite this tone of robust certitude. It seems, if anything, rather less openly contemptuous of philosophy; one even sees some signs of a suspicion that in our present circumstances the theory of things might be worth looking into, and it is especially towards the theory of sovereignty and rulership that this new attitude of hospitality appears to be developing. The condition of public affairs in all countries, notably in our own, has done more than bring under review the mere current practice of politics, the character and quality of representative politicians, and the relative merits of this-or-that form or mode of government. It has served to suggest attention to the one institution whereof all these forms or modes are but the several, and, from the theoretical point of view, indifferent, manifestations. It suggests that finality does not lie with consideration of species, but of genus; it does not lie with consideration of the characteristic marks that differentiate the republican State, monocratic State, constitutional, collectivist, totalitarian, Hitlerian, Bolshevik, what you will. It lies with consideration of the State itself.

The Great Stereopticon – Richard Weaver

The problem which disintegration places in the lap of practical men, those in charge of states, of institutions, of businesses, is how to persuade to communal activity people who no longer have the same ideas about the most fundamental things. In an age of shared belief, this problem does not exist, for there is a wide area of basic agreement, and dissent is viewed not as a claim to egotistic distinction but as a sort of excommunication. The entire group is conscious of the tendency, which furnishes standards for value judgments. When the goal of life becomes self-realization, however, this vanishes. It vanishes right at that point where the ego asserts its independence; thereafter what reconciliation can there be between authority and individual will? The politicians and businessmen are not interested in saving souls, but they are interested in preserving a minimum of organization, for upon that depend their posts and their incomes. (347–48)

These leaders adopted the liberal's solution to their problem. That was to let religion go but to replace it with education, which supposedly would exercise the same efficacy. The separation of education from religion, one of the proudest achievements of modernism, is but an extension of the separation of knowledge from metaphysics. And the education thus separated can provide their kind of indoctrination.

The vested interests of our age, which, from all kinds of motives, desire to maintain traditional values or to get new values set up in their place, have constructed a wonderful machine, which we shall call the Great Stereopticon. It is the function of this machine to project selected pictures of life in the hope that what is seen will be imitated. All of us of the West who are within the long reach of technology are sitting in the audience. We are told the time to laugh and the time to cry, and signs are not wanting that the audience grows ever more responsive to its cues.

The Great Stereopticon, like most gadgets, has been progressively improved and added to until today it is a machine of three parts: the press, the motion picture, and the radio. Together they present a version of life quite as controlled as that taught by medieval religionists, though feeble in moral inspiration. (348, 349)

If the realization of truth is the product of a meeting of minds, we may be skeptical of the physical ability of the mechanism to propagate it as long as that propagation is limited to the printing and distribution of stories which give "one unvarying answer." And this circumstance brings up at once the question of the intention of the rulers of the press. There is much to indicate that modern publication wishes to minimize discussion. Despite many artful pretensions to the contrary, it does not want an exchange of views, save perhaps on academic matters. Instead, it encourages men to read in the hope that they will absorb. For one thing, there is the technique of display, with its implied evaluations. This does more of the average man's thinking for him than he suspects. For another, there is the stereotyping of whole phrases. These are carefully chosen not to stimulate reflection but to evoke stock responses of approbation or disapprobation. Headlines and advertising teem with them, and we seem to approach a point at which failure to make the stock response is regarded as faintly treasonable, like refusal to salute the flag. ... So journalism becomes a monstrous discourse ... which charms by hypnotizing and thwarts that participation without which one is not a thinking man. ... As the modern world is organized, the ordinary reader seems to lose means of private judgment, and the decay of conversation has about destroyed the practice of dialectic. Consequently the habit of credulity grows. (350–51)

Every student of the motion picture has been impressed with the great resourcefulness of this medium.

We need not speak of the enormous influence of this synoptic depiction of life upon children and adolescents. [Our] interest is rather in the deleterious effects of movie-going upon even adult mentalities that find satisfaction in it. That the public as a whole misses the issue of the motion picture's influence can be seen from its attitude toward censorship. For what the public is reconciled to seeing censored are just the little breaches of decorum which fret bourgeois respectability. ... The truth is that these are so far removed from the heart of the problem that they could well be ignored. The thing that needs to be censored is not the length of the kisses but the egotistic, selfish, and self-flaunting hero; not the relative proportion of undraped breast but the flippant, vacuous-minded, and also egotistic heroine. Let us not worry about the jokes of dubious propriety; let us rather object to the whole story, with its complacent assertion of the virtues of materialist society.

The spurious nature of the “interest” of the ordinary movie shows an indifference to the real issues of life. ... It has been said that tragedy is for aristocrats, comedy is for bourgeoisie, and farce is for peasants. What percentage of the output of motion-picture factories can qualify as tragedy? With the animated cartoon, a growing percentage qualifies as farce. (354–55)

The primary effect of the radio is to disorder further our picture of the world by diminishing the opportunity for genuine selection. ... One skims through a newspaper, practicing a certain art of rejection; the movie he may stay away from, but the radio is insistently present; indeed the victims of this publicity are virtually hunted down. In few public places do we escape it, and our neighbor’s loud-speaker may penetrate the very sanctum of our privacy. In our listening, voluntary or not, we are made to grow accustomed to the weirdest of juxtapositions: the serious and the trivial, the comic and the tragic. ... During the recent war what person of feeling was not struck by the insanity of hearing advertisements for laxatives between announcements of the destruction of famous cities by aerial bombardment? Is it not a travesty of all sense to hear reports fraught with disaster followed by the comedy-variety with its cheap wit and arranged applause.

Here, it would seem, is the apotheosis; here is the final collapsing of values, a fantasia of effects, suggesting in its wild disorder the debris left by a storm. Here is the daily mechanical wrecking of hierarchy (this applause, of course, tells the listeners when to react and how and so further submerges them in massness). (355)

Thus far we have been speaking of specific temptations to suppress and distort; it is now time to look at the fundamental source of the harm done by the Great Stereopticon. If we are pleading for unity of mind and if we admit the necessity for some degree of subjective determination, it might appear that this machine, with its power to make the entire environment rhetorical, is a heaven-sent answer to our needs. We do not in the final reckoning desire uninterpreted data; it is precisely the interpretation which holds our interest. But the great fault is that data, as it passes through the machine, takes its significance from a sickly metaphysical dream. The ultimate source of evaluation ceases to be the dream of beauty and truth and becomes that of psychopathia, of fragmentation, of disharmony and nonbeing.

The sickly metaphysical dream is not the creation solely of those who have cast restraint to the winds to seek profit in sensationalism. It is the work, too, of many who profess higher ideals but who cannot see where their assumptions lead. Fundamental to the dream, of course, is the dogma of progress, with its postulate of the endlessness of becoming. The habit of judging all things by their departure from the things of yesterday is reflected in most journalistic interpretation. Hence the restlessness and the criteria of magnitude and popularity. The fact that capitalism seems to flourish only by expansion is no doubt connected with this; but, whatever the cause may be, there is no law of perfection where there are no standards of measure. The touchstone of progress simply schools the millions in shallow evaluation.

Thus, by insisting upon the dogma of progress, by picturing physical sufficiency as the goal of living, by insulating the mind against thoughts of an immanent reality, the Great Stereopticon keeps the ordinary citizen from perceiving “the vanity of his bookkeeping and the emptiness of his domestic felicities.” It is the great projection machine of the bourgeois mentality, which we have already seen to be psychopathic in its alienation from reality. (356, 357, 358)

In summary, the plea that the press, motion picture, and radio justify themselves by keeping people well informed turns out to be misleading. If one thinks merely of facts and of vivid sensations, the claim has some foundation, but if he thinks of encouragement to meditation, the contrary rather is true. For by keeping the time element continuously present—and one may recall Henry James’s description of journalism as criticism of the moment at the moment ... they discourage composition and so promote the fragmentation already reviewed. We have seen in other connections how specialization is hostile to all kinds of organization, whether that organization is expressed as image, as whole, or as generalization. In the last analysis this reveals itself as an attempt to prevent the simultaneous perception of successive events, which is the achievement of the philosopher. Materialism and success require the “decomposed eternity” of time for their operation, and this is why we have these hidden but persistent attacks on memory, which holds successive events in a single picture. The successive perception of successive events is empiricism; the simultaneous perception is idealism. Need we go further to account for the current dislike of long memories and for the hatred of the past? (361–62)

American Conservatism: Milton Friedman - Capitalism and Freedom

p.369 -----

Beginning in the late 19th century, the **intellectual ideas** associated with the term liberalism came to have a very different emphasis, particularly in the economic area. Whereas **19th-century liberalism emphasized freedom, 20th-century liberalism tended to emphasize welfare**. I would say welfare instead of freedom though the 20th-century liberal would no doubt say welfare in addition to freedom. **The 20th-century liberal puts his reliance primarily upon the state rather than on private voluntary arrangements.**

p.370

... the views I shall present might equally be entitled, under current conditions, the "**new liberalism**," a more attractive designation than "nineteenth-century liberalism.

... The essential thesis, I believe, of a new liberal is that this idea is... that there is an intimate connection between economic arrangements and political arrangements, and that only certain combinations are possible.

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The citizen of the United States who is compelled by law to devote 10% of his income to the purchase of a particular kind of retirement contract, administered by the government, is **being deprived of a corresponding part of his own personal freedom**. How strongly this particular deprivation may be felt, and its closeness to the **deprivation of religious freedom**, which all would regard as "civil" or "political" rather than "economic," was dramatized by a group of Ohio or Pennsylvania farmers of a particular **religious sect**. On grounds of principle, this group regarded compulsory federal old age programs as an infringement on their own personal individual freedom and refused to pay taxes or accept benefits. As a result, some of their livestock were sold at auction to satisfy claims for social security levies. **A citizen of the United States who under the laws of various states is not free to follow the occupation of his own choosing unless he can get a license for it is likewise being deprived of an essential part of his freedom.** So economic freedom, in and of itself, is an extremely important part of total freedom.

The reason it is important to emphasize this point is because **intellectuals in particular have a strong bias against regarding this aspect of freedom as important**. They tend to express contempt for what they regard as material aspects of life and to regard their own pursuit of allegedly higher values as on a different plane of significance and as deserving special attention. But for the **ordinary citizen** of the country, for the **great masses of the people**, the direct importance of economic freedom is in many cases of at least comparable importance to the indirect importance of economic freedom as a means of political freedom.

p.372

Viewed as a means to the end of political freedom, economic arrangements are essential because of the effect which they have on the **concentration or the deconcentration of power**.

p.374 -----

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The essence of political freedom is the absence of coercion of one **man** by his fellow **men**. The fundamental danger to political freedom is the concentration of power. The existence of a large measure of power in the hands of a relatively few individuals enables them to use it to coerce their fellow man. Preservation of freedom requires either the elimination of power where that is possible, or its dispersal where it cannot be eliminated. It essentially requires a system of checks and

balances, like that explicitly incorporated in our Constitution. One way to think of a market system is as part of a broader system of checks and balances, as a system under which economic power can be a check to political power instead of an addition to it.

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Murray Rothbard, from *For a New Liberty*, 1973

Questions from ZW:

- How do the private enterprises of “ordinary citizens” contradict or further the State?
- What is the difference between agents of the State and individually wealthy private citizens?
- Would the emergence of States be prevented by a “free market” economy?

400–401

It is...particularly important for the State to make its rule seem inevitable: even if its reign is disliked, as it often is, it will then be met with the passive resignation expressed in the familiar coupling of “death and taxes.” One method is to bring to its side historical determinism: if X-State rules us, then this has been inevitably decreed for us by the Inexorable Laws of History (or the Divine Will, or the Absolute, or the Material Productive Forces), and nothing that any puny individuals may do can change the inevitable. It is also important for the State to inculcate in its subjects an aversion to any outcropping of what is now called “a conspiracy theory of history.” **For a search for “conspiracies,” as misguided as the results often are, means a search for motives, and an attribution of individual responsibility for the historical misdeeds of ruling elites.** If, however, any tyranny or venality or aggressive war imposed by the State was brought about not by particular State rulers but by mysterious and arcane “social forces,” or by the imperfect state of the world—or if, in some way, everyone was guilty (“We are all murderers,” proclaims a common slogan), then there is no point in anyone’s becoming indignant or rising up against such misdeeds. Furthermore, a discrediting of “conspiracy theories”—or indeed, of anything smacking of “economic determinism”—will make the subjects more likely to believe the “general welfare” reasons that are invariably put forth by the modern State for engaging in any aggressive actions.

401–402

With the land area of the globe now parcelled out among particular States, one of the basic doctrines and tactics of the rulers of each State has been to identify itself with the territory it governs. Since most men tend to love their homeland, the identification of that land and its population with the State is a means of making natural patriotism work to the State’s advantage. If, then, “Ruritania” is attacked by “Walldavia,” the first task of the Ruritanian State and its intellectuals is to convince the people of Ruritania that the attack is really upon them, and not simply upon their ruling class. In this way, **a war between rulers is converted into a war between peoples**, with each people rushing to the defense of their rulers in the mistaken belief that the rulers are busily defending them.

...

No one...is surprised or horrified to learn that businessmen are seeking higher profits. No one is horrified if workers leave lower-paying for higher-paying jobs. All this is considered proper and normal behavior. But if anyone should dare assert that politicians and bureaucrats are motivated by the desire to maximize their incomes, the hue and cry of “conspiracy theorist” or “economic determinist” spreads throughout the land. **The general opinion—carefully cultivated, of course, by the State itself—is that men enter politics or government purely out of devoted concern for the common good and the public weal.** What gives the gentlemen of the State apparatus their superior moral patina? Perhaps it is the dim and instinctive knowledge of the populace that the State is engaged in systematic theft and predation, and they may feel that only a dedication to altruism on the part of the State makes these actions tolerable. To consider politicians and bureaucrats subject to the same monetary aims as everyone else would strip the Robin Hood veil from State predation. **For it would then be clear that, in the**

Oppenheimer phrasing, ordinary citizens were pursuing the peaceful, productive “economic means” to wealth, while the State apparatus was devoting itself to the coercive and exploitative organized “political means.” The emperor’s clothes of supposed altruistic concern for the common weal would then be stripped from him.

408–409

While throughout Western history, intellectuals have formulated theories designed to check and limit State power, each State has been able to use its own intellectuals to turn those ideas around into further legitimations of its own advance of power. Thus, originally, in Western Europe the concept of the “divine right of kings” was a doctrine promoted by the Church to limit State power. The idea was that the king could not just impose his arbitrary will. His edicts were limited to conforming with the divine law. As absolute monarchy advanced, however, the kings were able to turn the concept around to the idea that God put his stamp of approval on any of the king’s actions; that he ruled by “divine right.”

Similarly, the concept of parliamentary democracy began as a popular check on the absolute rule of the monarch. The king was limited by the power of parliament to grant him tax revenues. Gradually, however, as parliament displaced the king as head of State, the parliament itself became the unchecked State sovereign. In the early nineteenth century, English utilitarians, who advocated additional individual liberty in the name of social utility and the general welfare, were to see these concepts turned into sanctions for expanding the power of the State.

American Conservatism: Milton Friedman - Capitalism and Freedom

p.369 -----

Beginning in the late 19th century, the **intellectual ideas** associated with the term liberalism came to have a very different emphasis, particularly in the economic area. Whereas **19th-century liberalism emphasized freedom, 20th-century liberalism tended to emphasize welfare**. I would say welfare instead of freedom though the 20th-century liberal would no doubt say welfare in addition to freedom. **The 20th-century liberal puts his reliance primarily upon the state rather than on private voluntary arrangements.**

p.370

... the views I shall present might equally be entitled, under current conditions, the "**new liberalism**," a more attractive designation than "nineteenth-century liberalism.

It is widely believed that economic arrangements are one thing and political arrangements another, that any kind of economic arrangement can be associated with any kind of political arrangement. This is the idea that underlies such a term as "**democratic socialism**." This material may be protected by copyright. The essential thesis, I believe, of a **new liberal** is that this idea is... that there is an intimate connection between economic arrangements and political arrangements, and that only certain combinations are possible.

p.371 -----

The citizen of the United States who is compelled by law to devote 10% of his income to the purchase of a particular kind of retirement contract, administered by the government, is **being deprived of a corresponding part of his own personal freedom**. How strongly this particular deprivation may be felt, and its closeness to the **deprivation of religious freedom**, which all would regard as "civil" or "political" rather than "economic," was dramatized by a group of Ohio or Pennsylvania farmers of a particular **religious sect**. On grounds of principle, this group regarded compulsory federal old age programs as an infringement on their own personal individual freedom and refused to pay taxes or accept benefits. As a result, some of their livestock were sold at auction to satisfy claims for social security levies. **A citizen of the United States who under the laws of various states is not free to follow the occupation of his own choosing unless he can get a license for it is likewise being deprived of an essential part of his freedom**. So economic freedom, in and of itself, is an extremely important part of total freedom.

The reason it is important to emphasize this point is because **intellectuals in particular have a strong bias against regarding this aspect of freedom as important**. They tend to express contempt for what they regard as material aspects of life and to regard their own pursuit of allegedly higher values as on a different plane of significance and as deserving special attention. But for the **ordinary citizen** of the country, for the **great masses of the people**, the direct importance of economic freedom is in many cases of at least comparable importance to the indirect importance of economic freedom as a means of political freedom.

p.372

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Patrick Deneen – “Unsustainable Liberalism”

[Liberalism] is a bold political and social experiment that is far from certain to succeed. Its very apparent strengths rest upon a large number of pre-, non-, and even antiliberal institutions and resources that it has not replenished, and in recent years has actively sought to undermine. This “drawing down” on its preliberal inheritance is not contingent or accidental but in fact an inherent feature of liberalism.

Many of what are considered liberalism’s signal features—particularly political arrangements such as constitutionalism, the rule of law, rights and privileges of citizens, separation of powers, the free exchange of goods and services in markets, and federalism—are to be found in medieval thought. Inviolable human dignity, constitutional limits upon central power, and equality under law are part of a preliberal legacy.

The strictly political arrangements of modern constitutionalism do not per se constitute a liberal regime. Rather, liberalism is constituted by a pair of deeper anthropological assumptions that give liberal institutions a particular orientation and cast: 1) anthropological individualism and the voluntarist conception of choice, and 2) human separation from and opposition to nature. These two revolutions in the understanding of human nature and society constitute “liberalism” inasmuch as they introduce a radically new definition of “liberty.”

Liberalism introduces a particular cast to its preliberal inheritance mainly by ceasing to account for the implications of choices made by individuals upon community, society, and future generations. Liberalism did not introduce the idea of choice. It dismissed the idea that there are wrong or bad choices, and thereby rejected the accompanying social structures and institutions that were ordered to restrain the temptation toward self-centered calculation. (415, 416)

The first revolution, and the most basic and distinctive aspect of liberalism, is to base politics upon the idea of voluntarism—the free, unfettered, and autonomous choice of individuals. [For example, a core proto-liberal defense of monarchic rule grounds the sovereign’s legitimacy in individuals volunteering to surrender a degree of their autonomy to the king in exchange for security.]

The state is created to restrain the external actions of individuals and legally restricts the potentially destructive activity of radically separate human beings. Law is a set of practical restraints upon self-interested individuals; there is no assumption of the existence of self-restraint born of mutual concern. ... All legitimate authority is vested in the state. It is the sole creator and enforcer of positive law and even determines legitimate and illegitimate expressions of religious belief. The state is charged with the maintenance of social stability and with preventing a return to natural anarchy.

Human beings are by nature, therefore, “non-relational” creatures, separate and autonomous. Liberalism thus begins a project by which the legitimacy of all human relationships—beginning with, but not limited to, political bonds—becomes increasingly subject to the criterion of whether or not they have been *chosen*, and chosen upon the basis of their service to rational self-interest. (416–417)

Liberalism began with the explicit assertion, and has continued to claim, that it merely *describes* our political, social, and private decision-making. Yet implicitly it was constituted as a constructive or normative project: What it presented as a description of human voluntarism in fact had to displace a very different form of human self-understanding and long-standing experience. In effect, liberal theory sought to educate people to think differently about themselves and their relationships. Liberalism often claims neutrality about the choices people make in liberal society; it is the defender of “Right,” not of any particular conception of the “Good.”

Yet it is not neutral about the basis on which people make their decisions. In the same way that courses in economics claiming merely to describe human beings as utility-maximizing individual actors in fact influence students to act more selfishly, so liberalism teaches a people to hedge commitments and adopt flexible relationships and bonds. Not only are all political and economic relationships fungible and subject to constant redefinition, but so are *all* relationships—to place, to neighborhood, to nation, to family, and to religion. Liberalism tends to encourage loose connections. (418)

The second revolution, and the second anthropological assumption that constitutes liberalism, is less visibly political. Premodern political thought ... understood the human creature to be part of a comprehensive natural order. Man was understood to have a *telos*, a fixed end, given by nature and unalterable. Human nature was continuous with the order of the natural world, and so humanity was required to conform both to its own nature as well as, in a broader sense, to the natural order of which human beings were a part. Human beings could freely act against their own nature and the natural order, but such actions deformed them and harmed the good of human beings and the world. [Western civilization's most influential meditations on the nature of the divine and the good reflect joint] efforts to delineate the limits that nature—thus, natural law—places upon human beings, and each seeks to educate man about how best to live within those limits, through the practice of virtues, in order to achieve a condition of human flourishing.

Liberal philosophy rejected this requirement of human self-limitation. It first displaced the idea of a natural order to which humanity is subject and thereafter the very notion of human nature itself. Liberalism inaugurated a transformation in the natural and human sciences, premised on the transformation of the view of human nature and on humanity's relationship to the natural world.

The first wave of this revolution ... insisted that man should seek the mastery of nature by employing natural science and a transformed economic system supportive of such an undertaking. The second wave ... replaced belief in the idea of a fixed human nature with a belief in human "plasticity" and capacity for moral progress and transformation. While these two iterations of liberalism ... contend today for ascendance, we would do better to understand their deep interconnection. **(418–419)**

Liberalism is thus not merely a narrowly political project of constitutional government and juridical defense of rights, as it is too often portrayed. Rather, it seeks the transformation of the entirety of human life and the world. Its two revolutions—its anthropological individualism and the voluntarist conception of choice, and its insistence on the human separation from and opposition to nature—created its distinctive and new understanding of liberty as the most extensive possible expansion of the human sphere of autonomous activity in the service of the fulfillment of the self. Liberalism rejects the ancient and preliberal conception of liberty as the learned capacity of human beings to govern their base and hedonistic desires.

Liberalism instead understands liberty as the condition in which one can act freely within the sphere that is unconstrained by positive law. Liberalism effectively remakes the world in the image of its vision of the state of nature, shaping a world in which the theory of natural human individualism becomes ever more a reality, secured through the architecture of law, politics, economics, and society. Under liberalism, human beings increasingly live in a condition of autonomy such as that first imagined by theorists of the state of nature, except that the anarchy that threatens to develop from that purportedly natural condition is controlled and suppressed through the imposition of laws and the corresponding growth of the state. With man liberated from constitutive communities (leaving only loose connections) and nature harnessed and controlled, the constructed sphere of autonomous liberty expands seemingly without limit. **(420–421)**

Contemporary "conservatism" does not offer an answer to liberalism, because it is itself a species of liberalism. ... A different paradigm is needed, one that intimately connects the cultivation of self-limitation and self-governance among constitutive associations and communities with a general ethic of thrift, frugality, saving, hard work, stewardship, and care.

The recognition of the central and constitutive role and the necessity of the varied institutions that exist between the state and the individual has been a staple observation of thinkers ... on both the nominal right and nominal left. ... As they have argued, family, citizenship, church, neighborhood, community, schools, and markets need to be drawn closer together in a more integrated whole, in every aspect ranging from the built environment to the cultivation of genuine local cultures arising from the varying circumstances of diverse places. Drawing them together requires an ethic of self-command. So long as the right tries to defend them without offering a broader ecology of a deeply integrated and formative community ... it can offer no real alternative to liberalism. **(424–425, 426)**

The historic triumph of secularism and individualism has presented a set of problems that looms large in contemporary thought. The modern release of the individual from traditional ties of class, religion, and kinship has made him free; but, on the testimony of innumerable works in our age, this freedom is accompanied not by the sense of creative release but by the sense of disenchantment and alienation. The alienation of man from historic moral certitudes has been followed by the sense of man's alienation from fellow man.

Where the lone individual was once held to contain within himself all the propensities of order and progress, he is now quite generally regarded as the very symbol of society's anxiety and insecurity. He is the consequence, we are now prone to say, not of moral progress but of social disintegration.

-Section 3, paragraphs 2 & 3

Common too is the helplessness of the individual before alien forces—not the hero who does things but, as Wyndham Lewis has put it, the hero to whom things are done. The disenchanted, lonely figure, searching for ethical significance in the smallest of things, struggling for identification with race or class or group, incessantly striving to answer the question, “Who am I, What am I,” has become, especially in Europe, almost the central literary type of the age.

-Section 3, end of paragraph 6

Thus the theologian Paul Tillich sees before him in the Western world today a culture compounded not of traditional faith and confidence, but one agitated by feelings of fear and anxiety, uncertainty, loneliness, and meaninglessness. So long as a strong cultural heritage existed, and with it a sense of membership, the modern ethic of individualism was tolerable. “But when the remnants of a common world broke down, the individual was thrown into complete loneliness and the despair connected with it.”

-Section 3, paragraph 10

But it has become obvious, surely, that technological progress and the relative satisfaction of material needs in a population offer no guarantee of the resolution of all deprivations and frustrations. Human needs seem to form a kind of hierarchy, ranging from those of a purely physical and self-preservative nature at the bottom to needs of a social and spiritual nature at the top. During a period when a population is concerned largely with achieving satisfaction of the lower order of needs—satisfaction in the form of production and distribution of material goods—the higher order of needs may scarcely be felt by the majority of persons. But with the satisfaction of the prime, material needs, those of a social and spiritual nature become ever more pressing and ever more decisive in the total scheme of things. Desires for cultural participation, social belonging, and personal status become irresistible and their frustrations galling. Material improvement that is unaccompanied by a sense of personal belonging may actually intensify social dislocation and personal frustration.

-Section 4, paragraph 7

Wendell Berry, "Local Knowledge," 2005

482-483

In that older world [before the Renaissance], the cities and towns mostly (though with significant exceptions) could take for granted that their tributary landscapes were populated by established rural communities that knew both how to make the land produce and how to take care of it.

It is still true that the center is supported by the periphery. All human economy is still land-based. To the extent that we must eat and drink and be clothed, sheltered, and warmed, we live from the land. The idea that we have now progressed from a land-based economy to an economy based on information is a fantasy.

It is still true also that the people of the center believe that the people of the periphery will always supply their needs from the land and will always keep the land productive: there will always be an abundance of food, fiber, timber, and fuel. This too is a fantasy. It is not known, but is simply taken for granted.

As its power of attraction increases, the center becomes more ignorant of the periphery. And under the pervasive influence of the center, the economic landscapes of the periphery have fewer and fewer inhabitants who know them well and know how to care properly for them. Many rural areas are now populated mostly by urban people.

484

The danger increases as the periphery is enlarged; the vulnerability of long supply lines is well understood. To give the most obvious example, **the United States has chosen (if that is the right word) to become an import-dependent society rather than to live principally from its own land and the work of its own people**, as if dependence on imported goods and labor can be consistent with political independence and self-determination. This inconsistency is making us, willy-nilly, an imperial power, which perhaps increases "business opportunities" for our government's corporate sponsors, but certainly increases our fragility and our peril. The economic independence of families, communities, and even regions has now been almost completely destroyed.

486

The assumption that science can serve as an adequate connector between people and land, and thus can effectively replace the common knowledge and culture of local farm communities, by now has the status of an official program—though the aim of science, more often than not, is to connect capital with profit. The ascendancy of the expert involves a withdrawal or relinquishment of confidence in local intelligence—that is, in the knowledge, experience, and mental competence of ordinary people doing ordinary work. The result, naturally, is that the competence of local intelligence has declined. We are losing the use of local minds at work on local problems. The right way to deal with a problem, supposedly, is to summon an expert from government, industry, or a university, who will recommend the newest centrally-devised mechanical or chemical solution. Thus capital supposedly replaces intelligence as the basis of work, just as information supposedly replaces land as the basis of the economy.

490-491

To use the handiest practical example, I am talking about the need for a two-way communication, a conversation, between a land grant university and the region for and to which it is responsible. The idea of the extension service should be applied to the whole institution. Not just the agricultural extension agents, but also the graduate teachers, doctors, lawyers, and other community servants should be involved. They should be carrying news from the university out into its region, of course. But this would be extension in two directions: They would also be carrying back into the university news of what is happening that works well, what is succeeding according to the best standards, what works locally. And they should be carrying back criticism also: what is not working, what the university is not doing that it should do, what it is doing that it should do better.

Henry Cabot Lodge – Speech in the U.S. Senate on the League of Nations

I have taken the trouble to trace in the merest outline the development of the Holy Alliance ... because I think it carries with it a lesson for us at the present moment, showing as it does what may come from general propositions and declarations of purposes in which all the world agrees. Turn to the preamble of the covenant of the league of nations now before us, which states the object of the league. It is formed 'in order to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war, by the prescription of open, just, and honorable relations between nations ...'

No one would contest the loftiness or the benevolence of these purposes. Brave words, indeed! They do not differ essentially from the preamble of the treaty of Paris, from which sprang the Holy Alliance. But the covenant of this league contains a provision which I do not find in the treaty of Paris, and which is as follows:

The assembly may deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the league or affecting the peace of the world.

No revolutionary movement, no internal conflict of any magnitude can fail to affect the peace of the world. The French Revolution, which was wholly internal at the beginning, affected the peace of the world to such an extent that it brought on a world war which lasted some 25 years. Can anyone say that our Civil War did not affect the peace of the world? At this very moment, who would deny that the condition of Russia, with internal conflicts raging in all parts of that great Empire, does not affect the peace of the world and therefore come properly within the jurisdiction of the league. 'Any matter affecting the peace of the world' is a very broad statement which could be made to justify almost any interference on the part of the league with the internal affairs of other countries. (664–665, 666)

If Europe desires such an alliance or league with a power of this kind, so be it. I have no objection, provided they do not interfere with the American Continents or force us against our will but bound by a moral obligation into all the quarrels of Europe. If England, abandoning the policy of Canning, desires to be a member of a league which has such powers as this, I have not a word to say. But I object in the strongest possible way to having the United States agree, directly or indirectly, to be controlled by a league which may at any time, and perfectly lawfully and in accordance with the terms of the covenant, be drawn in to deal with internal conflicts in other countries, no matter what those conflicts may be. We should never permit the United States to be involved in any internal conflict in another country, except by the will of her people expressed through the Congress which represents them. (667)

There is to me no distinction whatever in a treaty between what some persons are pleased to call legal and moral obligations. A treaty rests and must rest, except where it is imposed under duress and securities and hostages are taken for its fulfillment, upon moral obligations. No doubt a great power impossible of coercion can cast aside a moral obligation if it sees fit and escape from the performance of the duty which it promises. The pathway of dishonor is always open. I, for one, however, cannot conceive of voting for a clause of which I disapprove because I know it can be escaped in that way. Whatever the United States agrees to, by that agreement she must abide. Nothing could so surely destroy all prospects of the world's peace as to have any powerful nation refuse to carry out an obligation, direct or indirect, because it rests only on moral grounds. Whatever we promise we must carry out to the full, 'without mental reservation or purpose of evasion.' To me any other attitude is inconceivable. Without the most absolute and minute good faith in carrying out a treaty to which we have agreed, without ever resorting to doubtful interpretations or to the plea that it is only a moral obligation, treaties are worthless. The greatest foundation of peace is the scrupulous observance of every promise, express or implied, of every pledge, whether it can be described as legal or moral.

I return, then, to the first clause of article 10 [of the covenant of the League of Nations]. It is, I repeat, an individual obligation. It requires no action on the part of the league, except that in the second sentence the authorities of the league are to have the power to advise as to the means to be employed in order to fulfill the purpose of the first sentence. But that is a detail of execution, and I consider that we are morally and in honor bound to accept and act upon that advice. The broad fact remains that if any member of the league suffering from external aggression should appeal directly to the United States for support the United States would be bound to give that support in its own capacity and without reference to the action of other powers because the United States itself is bound, and I hope the day will never come when the United States will not carry out its promises. (668, 669).

[To] me the most objectionable in the league as it stands; the right of other powers to call out American troops and American ships to go to any part of the world, an obligation we are bound to fulfill under the terms of this treaty. I know the answer well—that of course they could not be sent without action by Congress. Congress would have no choice if acting in good faith, and if under article 10 any member of the league summoned us, or if under article 11 the league itself summoned us, we should be bound in honor and morally to obey. There would be no escape except by a breach of faith, and legislation by Congress under those circumstances would be a mockery of independent action. Is it too much to ask that provision should be made that American troops and American ships should never be sent anywhere or ordered to take part in any conflict except after the deliberate action of the American people, expressed according to the Constitution through their chosen representatives in Congress? (671)

Those of us, Mr. President, who are either wholly opposed to the league or who are trying to preserve the independence and the safety of the United States by changing the terms of the league and who are endeavoring to make the league, if we are to be a member of it, less certain to promote war instead of peace, have been reproached with selfishness in our outlook and with a desire to keep our country in a state of isolation.

But there is a wide difference between taking a suitable part and bearing a due responsibility in world affairs and plunging the United States into every controversy and conflict on the face of the globe. By meddling in all the differences which may arise among any portion or fragment of humankind we simply fritter away our influence and injure ourselves to no good purpose. We shall be of far more value to the world and its peace by occupying, so far as possible, the situation which we have occupied for the last 20 years and by adhering to the policy of Washington and Hamilton, of Jefferson and Monroe, under which we have risen to our present greatness and prosperity. The fact that we have been separated by our geographical situation and by our consistent policy from the broils of Europe has made us more than any one thing capable of performing the great work which we performed in the war against Germany, and our disinterestedness is of far more value to the world than our eternal meddling in every possible dispute could ever be. (686, 687)

It has been reiterated here on this floor, and reiterated to the point of weariness, that in every treaty there is some sacrifice of sovereignty. That is not a universal truth by any means, but it is true of some treaties and it is a platitude which does not require reiteration. The question and the only question before us here is how much of our sovereignty we are justified in sacrificing. In what I have already said about other nations putting us into war I have covered one point of sovereignty which ought never to be yielded, the power to send American soldiers and sailors everywhere, which ought never to be taken from the American people or impaired in the slightest degree. Let us beware how we palter with our independence. We have not reached the great position from which we were able to come down into the field of battle and help to save the world from tyranny by being guided by others. Our vast power has all been built up and gathered together by ourselves alone. We forced our way upward from the days of the Revolution, through a world often hostile and always indifferent. We owe no debt to anyone except to France in that Revolution, and those policies and those rights on which our power has been founded should never be lessened or weakened. It will be no service to the world to do so and it will be of intolerable injury to the United States. We will do our share. We are ready and anxious to help in all ways to preserve the world's peace. But we can do it best by not crippling ourselves. (689–690)

Charles Beard, "Giddy Minds and Foreign Quarrels," 1939

536–537

Frenetic preoccupation with foreign quarrels has now reached the proportion of a heavy industry in this country. All our universities have funds and endowments for teaching what is called "international relations," and since about 1918 a large part of this instruction has been stripped of all scientific pretensions and has been little more than propaganda for the League of Nations, collective security, collaboration with Great Britain and France, or some kind of regularized intervention by the United States Government in foreign controversies everywhere, except perhaps at Amritsar or in Syria. Hundreds of professors, instructors, and assistants, sustained by endowments, lecture to students, forums, women's clubs, academies, and dinner parties on their favorite theme — the duty of the United States to set the world aright. Peace societies, associations for the "study" of foreign affairs, councils, leagues, and committees for this and that, with millions of dollars at their disposal, are engaged in the same kind of propaganda, openly or under the guise of contemporary "scholarship."

546–547

Although his platform declared that "we shall continue to observe a true neutrality in the disputes of others," President Roosevelt, in December 1936, a little more than a month after his victory in the election, moved to violate neutrality in connection with the civil war in Spain. On his initiative a bill was drafted and jammed through Congress putting an embargo on munitions to the Loyalist government at Madrid. Whether he took this action at the suggestion of Great Britain, or to parallel British action in the Non-intervention Committee, so farcical in its operations, the upshot pointed in one direction — intervention in European affairs. The embargo was a violation of international law. It was a violation of a specific treaty with Spain. It was an insult to the government of Madrid, which the Government of the United States recognized as *de facto* and *de jure*. It smoothed the way for those non-interveners, Hitler and Mussolini, to destroy that government. **Whatever may have been President Roosevelt's intentions, he violated neutrality and entered into collaboration with Great Britain and France in a fateful policy which was responsible for the triumph of despotism, Hitler, and Mussolini, in Spain — the very kind of despotism and two of the biggest despots that he now denounces to the world.**

548–549

Apparently indifferent to the real nature of British and French tactics, President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull grew bolder in their determination to help Britain and France in whatever they were doing. In the summer of 1939 they opened a public campaign to break down the provision of the Neutrality Act which imposed an embargo on munitions in case of a foreign war "found" by the President. They had all along covertly fought this provision, without taking the risk of officially and openly denouncing it in the name of the Administration. The will of the country to stay out of foreign wars had been too strong. That will would have to be crushed. The President and the Secretary of State were well aware that Congress was not likely to give them the coveted power to name "aggressors" and throw the country into a conflict on the side of "peace lovers"; but they were none the less resolved if possible to erase every line of the Neutrality Act that stood in the way of their running the foreign affairs of the United States on the basis of constant participation in the quarrels of Europe and Asia, with war as their *ultima ratio*.

551–552; 554

The United States is a continental power separated from Europe by a wide ocean which, despite all changes in warfare, is still a powerful asset of defense. In the ordinary or regular vicissitudes of European politics the United States should not become implicated by any permanent ties. We should promote commerce, but force "nothing." We should steer clear of hates and loves. We should maintain correct and formal relations with all established governments without respect to their forms or their religions, whether Christian, Mohammedan, or

Shinto, or what have you. Efforts of any European powers to seize more colonies or to oppress independent states in this hemisphere, or to extend their systems of despotism to the New World will be regarded as a matter of concern to the United States as soon as they are immediately threatened and begin to assume tangible shape.

This policy was stated positively in the early days of our Republic. It was clear. It was definite. It gave the powers of the earth something they could understand and count upon in adjusting their policies and conflicts. It was not only stated. It was acted upon with a high degree of consistency until the great frenzy overtook us. It enabled the American people to go ahead under the principles of 1776, conquering a continent and building here a civilization which, with all its faults, has precious merits for us and is, at all events, our own. Under the shelter of this doctrine, human beings were set free to see what they could do on this continent, when emancipated from the privilege-encrusted institutions of Europe and from entanglement in the endless revolutions and wars of that continent.

...

And what should those who hold to such a continental policy for the United States say to the powers of Europe? They ought not to say: "Let Europe stew in its own juice; European statesmen are mere cunning intriguers; and we will have nothing to do with Europe." A wiser and juster course would be to say: "We cannot and will not underwrite in advance any power or combination of powers; let them make as best they can the adjustments required by their immediate interests in Europe, Africa, and Asia, about which they know more and over which they have great force; no European power or combination of powers can count upon material aid from the United States while pursuing a course of power politics designed to bolster up its economic interests and its military dominance; in the nature of things American sympathy will be on the side of nations that practice self-government, liberty of opinion and person, and toleration and freedom of thought and inquiry – but the United States has had one war for democracy; the United States will not guarantee the present distribution of imperial domains in Africa and Asia; it will tolerate no attempt to conquer independent states in this hemisphere and make them imperial possessions; in all sincere undertakings to make economic adjustments, reduce armaments, and co-operate in specific cases of international utility and welfare that comport with our national interest, the United States will participate within the framework of its fundamental policy respecting this hemisphere; this much, nations of Europe, and may good fortune attend you."

“

For the fact is that every nation is caught in the moral paradox of refusing to go to war unless it can be proved that the national interest is imperiled, and of continuing in the war only by proving that something much more than national interest is at stake. Our nation is not the only community of mankind which is tempted to hypocrisy. Every nation must come to terms with the fact that, though the force of collective self-interest is so great, that national policy must be based upon it; yet also the sensitive conscience recognizes that the moral obligation of the individual transcends his particular community. Loyalty to the community is therefore morally tolerable only if it includes values wider than those of the community.”

“The main force of isolationism came from the “realists,” as the slogan “America First” signifies. But the abortive effort to defy the forces of history which were both creating a potential world community and increasing the power of America beyond that of any other nation, was supported by pacifist idealists, Christian and secular, and by other visionaries who desired to preserve our innocence. They had a dim and dark understanding of the fact that power cannot be wielded without guilt, since it is never transcendent over interest, even when it tries to subject itself to universal standards and places itself under the control of a nascent world-wide community. They did not understand that the disavowal of the responsibilities of power can involve an individual or nation in even more grievous guilt.

There are two ways of denying our responsibilities to our fellowmen. The one is the way of imperialism, expressed in seeking to dominate them by our power. The other is the way of isolationism, expressed in seeking to withdraw from our responsibilities to them.”

“The inadequacy of both types of escape from our moral dilemma proves that there is no purely moral solution for the ultimate moral issues of life; but neither is there a viable solution which disregards the moral factors. Men and nations must use their power with the purpose of making it an instrument of justice and a servant of interests broader than their own. Yet they must be ready to use it though they become aware that the power of a particular nation or individual, even when under strong religious and social sanctions, is never so used that there is a perfect coincidence between the value which justifies it and the interest of the wielder of it.”

“One difficulty of a nation, such as ours, which manifests itself long before we reach the ultimate dilemma of warfare with weapons of mass destruction, is that we have reached our position in the world community through forms of power which are essentially covert rather than overt. Or rather the overt military power

American Conservatism - From the Irony of American History —Reinhold Niebuhr

which we wield has been directly drawn from the economic power, derived from the wealth of our natural resources and our technical efficiency.”

Ronald Reagan, "Address to Members of Parliament," 1982

593–595

Historians looking back at our time will note the consistent restraint and peaceful intentions of the West. They will note that it was the democracies who refused to use the threat of their nuclear monopoly in the forties and early fifties for territorial or imperial gain. Had that nuclear monopoly been in the hands of the Communist world, the map of Europe – indeed, the world – would look very different today. And certainly they will note it was not the democracies that invaded Afghanistan or suppressed Polish Solidarity or used chemical and toxin warfare in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia.

...

In an ironic sense Karl Marx was right. We are witnessing today a great revolutionary crisis, a crisis where the demands of the economic order are conflicting directly with those of the political order. But the crisis is happening not in the free, non-Marxist West, but in the home of Marxist-Leninism, the Soviet Union. **It is the Soviet Union that runs against the tide of history by denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens.** It also is in deep economic difficulty. The rate of growth in the national product has been steadily declining since the fifties and is less than half of what it was then.

The dimensions of this failure are astounding: a country which employs one-fifth of its population in agriculture is unable to feed its own people. Were it not for the private sector, the tiny private sector tolerated in Soviet agriculture, the country might be on the brink of famine. These private plots occupy a bare 3 percent of the arable land but account for nearly one-quarter of Soviet farm output and nearly one-third of meat products and vegetables. Overcentralized, with little or no incentives, year after year the Soviet system pours its best resource into the making of instruments of destruction. The constant shrinkage of economic growth combined with the growth of military production is putting a heavy strain on the Soviet people. What we see here is a political structure that no longer corresponds to its economic base, a society where productive forces are hampered by political ones.

The decay of the Soviet experiment should come as no surprise to us. Wherever the comparisons have been made between free and closed societies – West Germany and East Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, Malaysia and Vietnam – it is the democratic countries that are prosperous and responsive to the needs of their people. And one of the simple but overwhelming facts of our time is this: **Of all the millions of refugees we've seen in the modern world, their flight is always away from, not toward the Communist world.** Today on the NATO line, our military forces face east to prevent a possible invasion. On the other side of the line, the Soviet forces also face east to prevent their people from leaving.

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The hard evidence of totalitarian rule has caused in mankind an uprising of the intellect and will. Whether it is the growth of the new schools of economics in America or England or the appearance of the so-called new philosophers in France, there is one unifying thread running through the intellectual work of these groups – **rejection of the arbitrary power of the state, the refusal to subordinate the rights of the individual to the superstate, the realization that collectivism stifles all the best human impulses.**

Since the exodus from Egypt, historians have written of those who sacrificed and struggled for freedom – the stand at Thermopylae, the revolt of Spartacus, the storming of the Bastille, the Warsaw uprising in World War II. More recently we've seen evidence of this same human impulse in one of the developing nations in Central America. For months and months the world news media covered the fighting in El Salvador. Day after day we were treated to stories and film slanted toward the brave freedom-fighters battling oppressive government forces in behalf of the silent, suffering people of that tortured country.

And then one day those silent, suffering people were offered a chance to vote, to choose the kind of government they wanted. Suddenly the freedom-fighters in the hills were exposed for what they really are – Cuban-backed guerrillas who want power for themselves, and their backers, not democracy for the people. They threatened death to any who voted, and destroyed hundreds of buses and trucks to keep the people from

getting to the polling places. But on election day, the people of El Salvador, an unprecedented 1.4 million of them, braved ambush and gunfire, and trudged for miles to vote for freedom.

They stood for hours in the hot sun waiting for their turn to vote. Members of our Congress who went there as observers told me of a woman who was wounded by rifle fire on the way to the polls, who refused to leave the line to have her wound treated until after she had voted. A grandmother, who had been told by the guerrillas she would be killed when she returned from the polls, and she told the guerrillas, "You can kill me, you can kill my family, kill my neighbors, but you can't kill us all." The real freedom-fighters of El Salvador turned out to be the people of that country – the young, the old, the in-between.

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On distant islands in the South Atlantic young men are fighting for Britain. And, yes, voices have been raised protesting their sacrifice for lumps of rock and earth so far away. But those young men aren't fighting for mere real estate. **They fight for a cause – for the belief that armed aggression must not be allowed to succeed, and the people must participate in the decisions of government** – [applause] – the decisions of government under the rule of law. If there had been firmer support for that principle some 45 years ago, perhaps our generation wouldn't have suffered the bloodletting of World War II.

In the Middle East now the guns sound once more, this time in Lebanon, a country that for too long has had to endure the tragedy of civil war, terrorism, and foreign intervention and occupation. The fighting in Lebanon on the part of all parties must stop, and Israel should bring its forces home. But this is not enough. We must all work to stamp out the scourge of terrorism that in the Middle East makes war an ever-present threat.

But beyond the troublespots lies a deeper, more positive pattern. Around the world today, the democratic revolution is gathering new strength. In India a critical test has been passed with the peaceful change of governing political parties. In Africa, Nigeria is moving into remarkable and unmistakable ways to build and strengthen its democratic institutions. In the Caribbean and Central America, 16 of 24 countries have freely elected governments. And in the United Nations, 8 of the 10 developing nations which have joined that body in the past 5 years are democracies.

597–598

The objective I propose is quite simple to state: to foster the infrastructure of democracy, the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities, which allows a people to choose their own way to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means.

This is not cultural imperialism, it is providing the means for genuine self-determination and protection for diversity. Democracy already flourishes in countries with very different cultures and historical experiences. **It would be cultural condescension, or worse, to say that any people prefer dictatorship to democracy.** Who would voluntarily choose not to have the right to vote, decide to purchase government propaganda handouts instead of independent newspapers, prefer government to worker-controlled unions, opt for land to be owned by the state instead of those who till it, want government repression of religious liberty, a single political party instead of a free choice, a rigid cultural orthodoxy instead of democratic tolerance and diversity?

William Pfaff – *The Irony of Manifest Destiny*

A policy of nonintervention would rely heavily on diplomacy and analytical intelligence, with particular attention to history, since nearly all serious problems among nations are recurrent or have important recurring elements in them. Current crises concerning Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine-Israel all have origins in the European imperial systems and their dismantlement in the aftermath of the twentieth century's totalitarian wars. They are the legacy or in a sense the residue of the history of the last century, and their resolution must be sought in terms of that experience.

A noninterventionist American foreign policy requires a White House that will understand its primary responsibility to be the well-being and quality of American life. ... It would redefine its national security strategy narrowly so as to make its priorities the protection of the American polity and its constitutional government, and its security against military threat.

Such a noninterventionist policy would rely primarily on trade and the market, rather than on territorial control or military intimidation, to provide the resources and energy the United States needs. American security deployments abroad would be reexamined with attention to whether they might actually be impediments to solutions of the conflicts of clients. **(794–795)**

A noninterventionist foreign policy is entirely compatible with multilateral international reaction to atrocious public crimes and the existence of international criminal courts. ... However, it is extremely difficult to conduct international interventions in such matters with more positive than negative results, since many such emergencies have causes beyond decisive international remedy. The ultimate roots of the Darfur crisis are ethnic and climatic, since many arable regions of sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing gradual desertification, which causes conflict between the agricultural peoples of the border region and the nomadic or semi-nomadic people beyond, who are forced inland to feed their herds. Well-meant Western proposals to identify “villains” in such cases and impose military reprisals are usually futile. The Rwanda genocide was the result of the hypocrisies of colonialism and of decolonization and “democratization.” It was both ethnic in nature and a “class” war between the historically oppressed Hutu and their historic rulers, the Tutsi. The ironic outcome is that the ultimate consequence of the genocidal attack by the democratically empowered Hutu majority upon the Tutsi minority has been to restore Tutsi power in Rwanda. Humanitarian intervention itself often creates problems, as nongovernmental groups now readily acknowledge. UN and NGO action to feed and support refugees and casualties can, for example, reward an aggressor by taking his victims off his hands. **(798–799)**

My argument from the beginning of this essay has been that the United States is reenacting in war and politics a classic progression in humanity's collective as well as individual destiny in which the successive stages have consisted in the acquisition of great power—the increasing abuses of power that characterized the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and the eight years of the Bush administration, and thus far of its aftermath, with a subordination of ethical values to an ideology of national triumphalism. A conception of American Manifest Destiny as of universal relevance and validity has been held to justify the arbitrary use of power to impose the national will.

This sequence of events is not the result of any law of history, although humans experience its recurrence. It is recognized in literature, philosophy, and history as a characteristic pattern of human action. What is its culmination? How does it normally end? Aristotle, and the philosophers and artists of his time and before, found “pity and terror” in the artistic representation of such events and a moral catharsis in witnessing their tragic conclusion, considered ineluctable. **(801)**

Thucydides, writing of the war between Athens and Sparta, dismisses, as if beyond comment, the evidence of human bestiality loosed on the weak, the arrogance of leaders, the greed of the profiteers, and the criminal complacency of the demagogue, in order to speak of something more important: political stupidity.

The stupidity is “the belief that military measures and massacres can resolve intricate political-territorial contrarities of interest; the collective folly that seems to infect civic sensibility, making it tribal and infantile, in moments of victory; the incapacity of statecraft and sheer common sense to halt, to reexamine rationally the mechanism of waste and of mutual crippling, which wars set in motion. **(805)**

“The Last Progressive: Joe Biden and the Illusions of ‘Normalcy’” (2021)

Quote 1

Sometime around the turn of the twentieth century, “Americans decided to simmer down.” Popular interest in national politics declined. So, too, did voter turnout. Rather than a participatory sport, politics became something like an insiders’ game. Yet “American lives improved more in this period than in any other,” he contends. What many today remember, fondly or not, as “normal politics,” dominated by once prominent but now forgotten white male pols, prevailed. Making this possible, according to Grinspan, was “the unusually calmed twentieth century.”

By what standard does the twentieth century qualify as unusually calm? Grinspan doesn’t say. Given that it encompassed two horrific world wars, the Great Depression, a Cold War, at least [one brush](#) with Armageddon, multiple genocides, the collapse of several empires, and the rise and fall of various revolutionary ideologies, calm hardly seems an appropriate description.

Quote 2

Even today, progressives tout the altruistic component of their tradition, with its emphasis on equality, justice, and sympathy for the downtrodden. Yet high ideals rarely suffice to win elections. In practice, the progressive agenda has centered less on admirable intangibles than on concrete deliverables. On that score, progressives have sought to satisfy an all but insatiable American appetite for consumption, convenience, and mobility.

Here we come to the beating heart of contemporary American politics. As that system evolved toward its mature state — a mammoth enterprise that annually burns through trillions of dollars — uninhibited consumption and convenience, along with unbridled mobility came to define what citizens expected it to deliver. Hence, the outrage when store shelves are even momentarily empty and gas prices temporarily shoot up.

At root, the ultimate purpose of American politics in the modern era, seldom acknowledged but universally understood, has been to provide for more and better, quicker and easier, and faster and further. The very pursuit proved endless — the American political lexicon in those years did not include the word *enough* — and therefore, in the end, proved inherently disruptive.

Properly understood, in other words, the progressive project was never especially high-minded. Yet it was never anything other than deadly realistic.

Quote 3

President Biden contends that as a nation and a species we have today arrived at an “[inflection point](#)” — a favorite phrase of his. Yet even if fully implemented (a doubtful prospect), the Biden program has no chance of curing our present disorders. A warmed over, if pricier, version of FDR’s New Deal and LBJ’s Great Society, it’s too timid and too derivative. Progressivism once looked to the future; today, it’s stuck in the past.

So, the Biden version of progressivism may ameliorate, but it will never resolve a multi-dimensional crisis fed by soulless materialism, a [deepening climate emergency](#), a [perverse addiction](#) to dehumanizing technology, and a bizarre conviction that military power, amassed and endlessly employed, holds the key to stemming the tide of national decline.

With the passage of time, Carter's challenge to define true freedom has become more urgent. Time is short and global disaster looming. Yet arriving at a clearer understanding of what true freedom should entail will require more than simmering. To repurpose a phrase from an earlier era, "burn, baby, burn" may be the order of the day. At least metaphorically, identifying an antidote to our own malaise might begin not with reducing the heat, but turning it up.

The Compulsion to Intervene: Why Washington Underwrites Violence in Ukraine

Courageous Ukrainians certainly deserve to have their stalwart defense of their country rewarded with success. Yet the long history of warfare sounds a distinctly cautionary note. The fact is that the good guys don't necessarily win. Stuff happens. Chance intervenes.

I make no pretense to be able to divine the thinking that prevails within senior Ukrainian military circles, but the basic math does them no favors. Russia's population is roughly four times greater than Ukraine's, its economy 10 times larger.

Western support, especially the more than \$75 billion in assistance the U.S. has so far committed, has certainly kept Ukraine in the fight. The West's implicit game plan is one of mutual attrition — bleeding Ukraine as a way to bleed Russia — with the apparent expectation that the Kremlin will eventually say uncle.

Prospects of success depend on either of two factors: a change in leadership in the Kremlin or a change of heart on the part of President Putin. Neither of those, however, appears imminent.

Put simply, a war of attrition in which the U.S. suffers no casualties while plenty of Russians die suits some key players in Washington. In such circles, whether it comports with the well-being of the Ukrainian people receives no more than lip service.

American enthusiasm for punishing Russia might actually have made strategic sense if the zero-sum logic of the Cold War still pertained.

In the present moment, however, Russia is anything but America's principal global adversary; nor is it obvious, given the pressing problems facing the United States domestically and in our own near abroad, why baiting Ivan should figure as a strategic priority. Beating up on the Russian army on battlefields several thousand miles away won't, for example, provide an antidote to Trumpism or solve the problem of this country's porous borders. Nor will it alleviate the climate crisis.

If anything, in fact, Washington's preoccupation with Ukraine only testifies to the impoverished state of American strategic thinking. In some quarters, framing the present historical moment as a contest between democracy and autocracy passes for fresh thinking, as does characterizing American policy as focused on defending a so-called rules-based international order. Neither of those claims, however, can withstand nominal scrutiny, even if it seems bad form to cite close U.S. ties with autocracies like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt or to point out the innumerable instances in which this country has exempted itself from norms to which it insists others must adhere.

The gung-ho American journalists summoning Ukrainians to punch holes in enemy lines might better serve their readers by reflecting on the larger pattern of American interventionism that began several decades ago and culminated in the disastrous fall of Kabul in 2021.

In Central America, the Persian Gulf, the Maghreb, the Balkans, and Central Asia, successive administrations embarked on a series of interventions that rarely produced any long-term successes, while exacting staggering cumulative costs.

Since 9/11 alone, U.S. military interventions in distant lands have cost American taxpayers an estimated \$8 trillion and still counting. And that's not even considering the tens of thousands of G.I.s killed, maimed, or otherwise left bearing the scars of war or the millions of people in the countries where the U.S. fought its wars who would prove to be direct or indirect victims of American policy-making.

With something close to unanimity, Americans profess to care about the sacrifices of those who serve the nation in uniform. Why don't we care enough to keep them from harm in the first place?