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On the Bush Tax Cuts — Logos Summer 2003

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

The science of economics is a political science.
—Max Weber

Few domestic political issues have been debated with more passion than the tax cut that was proposed by the Bush administration and recently passed by Congress. The tax cuts have been characterized as everything from a giveaway to the rich to a stimulus package for an ailing economy. Political rhetoric frequently coalesces with "social science," statistics and economic argumentation, but—interestingly enough—the political character of decision-making on tax policy has tended to disappear from the public debate. What I think is happening, however, is not simply a rethinking of tax codes or a move away from the redistributional character of the post-war American welfare state. Rather, there is a reformation of American democracy through the policy prescriptions of the Bush administration where the acute separation of economics from politics may very well lead to an erosion of the democratic character of the United States. What characterizes the political rhetoric of the Bush administration and neoconservatives?

Without question, linking taxes and democracy has been a consistent theme in American politics. From the birth of the republic, through the massive inequities of the Gilded Age and the great redistributive policies of the New Deal, the War On Poverty and the Great Society, there has always existed a consistent link between the emergence of the state as a participant in the public sphere and the expansion of democracy, especially in economic terms. But recently, the view has emerged that the expansion of the state and the services it provides, its public goods—what we commonly call the welfare state—stands in sharp contradiction to the values of liberty, freedom and democracy. The more the state encroaches on me, the citizen, the less free I am; the less money I am able to keep from what I earn, the more the government is interfering with my liberty. This is the essential rhetoric of anti-tax conservatives like Grover Norquist, one of George W. Bush's top political advisors:

> Look, the center right coalition in American politics today is best understood as a coalition of groups and individuals [and] the issue that brings them to politics [is that] what they want from the government is to be left alone. Taxpayers, don't raise my taxes. Property owners, don't restrict or limit my property. Home-schoolers, let me educate my own kids. Gun owners, don't restrict my Second Amendment rights. All communities of faith, Evangelical Christians, conservative Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, Orthodox Jews, people want to practice their own religion and be left alone to raise their own kids.[1]

Known as the "leave us alone" coalition, such is the ideological context that includes the politics of the most recent tax cuts; an ideology grounded in a much broader conception of society, politics and culture; one premised on a curious mix of libertarian individualism with a provincial, parochial communitarianism. But this is merely a surface phenomenon. It appeals only to the conservative sentiments of a public that has been ideologically dragged to the right over the past two and a half decades. But the material impact of the tax cuts are typically felt at the local levels. This is, in part, a result of tax cutting policies which begin at the federal level and have trickled down over the years into the policies of states.

As federal tax cuts increased throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was an increased pressure states and cities to shoulder the cost of schools and other social services. The politics of the tax cut must therefore be seen first and foremost as a broad attempt to reorient the way in which American democracy was heading since the New Deal which itself was based on the realization that the effects of capitalism on society required the intervention of the state in order to counteract the effects of what Stephen Eric Bronner has called the "whip of the market" from staggering economic inequality and poverty reduction and cyclical economic crises. Later, issues ranging from pollution to enhanced social services and programs were on the minds of the public and began to enter the political agenda of the Democratic Party. It was a conception of democracy that realized that unequal economic power rendered "equal" political rights practically meaningless and that only through the fair distribution of social wealth could political and social rights truly be extended and realized.

One of the main functions of tax policy is the redistribution of income and it is around this issue that the rallying cry for those who seek

the reformation of the tax code in America is organized. Whatever else taxes may actually do as an instrument of public policy, the core argument used for the tax cuts has consistently been to link economic productivity (the welfare of everyone) and personal income (the welfare of the individual or family). It is, in so many ways, a flawless political strategy—one that hits Americans where they feel they need it the most, even though the numbers do not work out in their benefit. Most taxpayers therefore see their responsibility as restricted to the sphere of the local. In this sense, an element of racism often enters the picture once largely white and better-off municipalities pay taxes that are redistributed to inner city neighborhoods located close by. What is seen by the average taxpayer is therefore not a set of goods and services, but a complex tax system that is impenetrable and, at the local level, even seen as simply unfair

where ailing inner city schools require tax revenues collected at the state or county level from more affluent, largely white suburbs.

Redistribution is one of the main targets of the Bush tax cut and its impact will be substantial. Recent data show that, even before the current tax cut was put into effect, the top 400 wealthiest taxpayers paid less taxes in 2000 than in both 1995 and in 1992. In the past nine years, the incomes of the "top 400 tax payers increased 15 times the rate of the bottom 90 percent of Americans."[2] And it is important to point out in this context that the top 1 percent of income earners in America have a 26 percent share of the tax burden while their share of the Bush tax cuts is over 50 percent.[3]

However we may view the rhetoric of the tax cuts, what is becoming ever more apparent is a gradual destruction of the public sector and the expansion of the market to more domains of society. In this sense, the Bush tax cuts are not merely an expression of fiscal policy. They also fundamentally serve a larger project of redirecting the way that American democracy has functioned throughout the post-war era. This redirection involves a wholesale transformation in the way that government can act to soften the harsh impacts of the capitalist economy whether it is in the form of economic inequality or environmental degradation.

Tax Reform and Political Opportunism: Bush in Context

The trend toward tax reform in the 1980s was, it should be admitted, the result of many legitimate economic pressures. The problem was not in the changing economics of global capitalism but in the way the politics of the right in America—as well as other nations—used this economic pressure for its own ideological ends. This can be explained in the flowing way. During the post-war years, there was a general consensus among policy makers that taxes should be progressive and used as tools for economic management. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, this Keynesian logic made possible spending on large social programs and the investment in infrastructure. Business and the wealthy paid large marginal tax rates as opposed to the poor, working, and middle classes. This form of redistribution that allowed working people and even entire regions of the country to migrate to improved living conditions and to enjoy improved social services and public goods.

Arguments were often made about the degree to which these taxes were indeed progressive. Political élites—more often than not representatives of business interests—made the argument time and again that a reduction of taxes would mean an increase in economic growth and productivity (a rise in GDP). However, such political arguments had very little support. First, there was the problem of politics. Americans overwhelmingly supported progressive taxation since the majority of them benefited from it directly. But next, the few studies that were made on the link between taxation and economic growth showed that there was no relationship at all.[4] Anti-tax political rhetoric therefore lacked, through the 1950s and 1960s and well into the 1970s, any political support from the citizenry of the United States and also any empirical support from the social science establishment.

This situation began to change in the late 1970s. For one thing, as American workers began to prosper they also started moving up in income tax brackets and getting hit by increasingly higher tax rates. This was part of the system's design, and it also showed the old system was actually working. Tax revenues were supposed to grow automatically since "as the economy expanded, inflation pushed more and more individuals into higher and higher tax brackets as their nominal incomes increased."[5] The tax system that had been devised and implemented in the 1950s and early 1960s began to lose its redistributive impact since the classes that, in the past, had benefited from the redistribution of wealth were now being taxed at ever higher rates and the benefits were no longer as clear as they once were. The result was a sharp increase in political pressure toward tax reform which, with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, led to a wholesale redirection of American government and its tax policies from the weakening of government agencies such as Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to an expanded federal deficit and the start of a widening gap in income and wealth that continues to grow today.

The economic facts were merely an entrée for neoconservatives to argue their case for the minimal state and the reduction of taxes on corporations and the wealthy. Tax reform was necessary, but not the sort of draconian cuts in public services and institutions that served the working poor that were inevitably enacted. Instead of a reworking of increasingly complex tax codes and regulations, tax cuts were initiated that helped exacerbate inequalities that were growing from the impacts of a post-industrial economy. What the conservatives of the "Reagan Revolution" did was to focus opportunistically on public dissatisfaction about growing tax burdens created by a system that was in need of reform and use this public sentiment to trample the welfare state.

On the whole, the statistical data is clear for anyone who has any casual acquaintance with the econometric studies and economic data: since 1980, there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of taxation and economic growth: as taxes increased, economic performance lessened in terms of GDP growth. This situation changed from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s because there was a reconfiguration of global capitalism. From the 1980s onward, there was an increased global mobility of capital and the result was that corporations were able to move spatially to avoid costs. Taxes were among these costs. By 1990, this was a general theory of business planning with Michael Porter's book, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, serving as one of the central texts coaching businesses in how to avoid the costs of producing in only one site, especially a site that was not "friendly" to business in terms of tax rates and regulatory limitations. Corporations were encouraged to move to places where the tax burden—as well as wages and other limitations—were less prohibitive to profits. In the United States, this meant moving many factory jobs out of the northeastern states, where labor unions were strong and businesses taxes were higher at the state and local levels, to the south or to other countries (i.e., Mexico).

As the global economy began to change, the political economy of American taxation began to change as well. But this is where the crucial issue arises: even though there clearly were economic pressures brought on by this restructuring and the American tax system was in need of reform to remain a viable method of redistribution, the political reality was something quite

different. The populist cry for tax reform was translated by the Reagan administration into a project of restructuring the state—a project which is still ongoing—where the role of the state in providing services was bypassed in favor of privatization and the redistributive functioning of taxation was rolled back. Legitimate needs for tax reform were therefore twisted by conservatives in an attempt to reorganize government and transform American democracy.

Redefining and Restructuring American Democracy

In 1843, the German economist Wilhelm Roscher wrote that political economy is not merely the "art of acquiring wealth; it is a political science based on evaluating and governing people."[6] Economics is therefore a field that is fundamentally concerned with the very idea of the public good, it is far from being a value-free science. This is something that has been lost in recent debates on the politics of the Bush tax cut. The assumption—or even the outright belief—remains that there are legitimate economic reasons that can justify the various tax cuts which, and this is usually openly admitted, explicitly favor the wealthy. Inequalities that are generated from the tax cuts are considered "justifiable" first on supposedly economic grounds (i.e., promoting growth and employment) and, at times, on ethical grounds, in the sense that everyone deserves to keep whatever they "earn." But neither of these contentions actually make sense. No empirical evidence links tax cuts on wealthier income earners and employment, nor is there any reliable evidence that supports a link between tax cuts on individual income and economic growth, even if there is evidence, as was discussed above, that corporate tax rates do affect growth rates. Economic policy is being done for political ends and the actual content and intention of this politics needs to be seen for what it is: a reconfiguration of American democracy. This reconfiguration means a retreat from the idea that the state ought to meliorate class differences, the acceptance of the idea that political democracy is somehow indifferent to economic and social inequality, and toward a situation where the market extends to almost every aspect of public life.

It is interesting to note that the Bush administration openly admits that its tax cuts favor the wealthy. This is a marked change from even twenty years ago when the political theorist Philip Green could write that "[s]pecial advantages for economic élites, as in the United States tax code, are introduced *sub rosa*, never proclaimed out loud. No one defends legislation by suggesting that the better class should be rewarded more and the inferior class less."[7] Today, there has been a shift in the political sensitivity to social inequality and class division.

It is a specific political philosophy, or ideology, that essentially defines the Bush tax cuts. The Bush administration's economic argument that the tax cuts will somehow stimulate a dragging economy and increase employment has little support in theory and no support empirically. The tax cuts are proposed as part of a stimulus package, one that will promote economic growth. But, as James K. Galbraith has recently pointed out, these cuts are not a growth policy for two crucial reasons: "They are targeted to the wealthy, and they are back-loaded so as to conceal their true long-term impact on budget deficits."[8] The extent of the tax cuts is therefore structured so that the real effects on the budget will not show up for another ten years or so since tax cuts on the wealthy will continue to diminish tax revenues and therefore increasingly

bankrupt the state. Of course, this is not obvious when one examines the tax plan since such easily perceived hardship would cause at least a small degree of backlash.

It is well-known economic logic that growth could be stimulated by new and increased government spending, something that has not even been publicly debated by the Bush administration's economic policy advisors. This is because it would put the United States back in a Keynesian policy state of mind; and this means that there would be legitimacy in refunding the state and this would give some weight to political interests that want to expand the welfare state, government programs, regulatory agencies and other things which would be antithetical to the pro-business mentality and interests of the neoconservative agenda. In other words, once the state becomes more active in the economy, there is more likelihood that that state will also be used for expanding social programs. This runs directly counter to the current trend of shrinking the state and its influence in both economy and society.

There is also the question of economic growth and job creation. This issue has been at the core of the Bush administration's arguments for the tax cuts as well as a broad conservative wave of support. Heritage Foundation economist Mark Wilson claimed in a recent study that if the tax cuts were made retroactive to the beginning of 2003, 1.6 million jobs would be added to the economy by 2011 and expand economic output by another $248 billion.9 But there have been no academic economists who have been able to verify these findings in a single peer reviewed professional journal, and it is little surprise why. The rationale is classic "supply-side" economic thinking: the more money that is poured into the economy by letting people keep what they earn—so the supply-siders argue, in theory of course—the more society as a whole will benefit since people—especially the wealthy—will be more likely to invest in the economy and start new enterprises. A "free" market liberated from any type of restraint, regulation and public accountability is therefore the optimal arrangement for liberty and democracy.10 This is the essential view that informs neoconservative political and social thought, but it is not a fact of economic science. Recall 1993 when there was an increase in the top income tax rate from 33 percent to 39.6 percent and *still* there was an increase in capital investment and a flourishing economy throughout the remainder of the 1990s. From the point of view of empirical evidence, the conservative argument quite simply makes no sense.

It is more correct to say, then, that there is a *political* imperative behind this shift in economic policy, and its agenda is the fundamental transformation of American democracy as we have known it throughout the post-war period. The primary motivation is the ideological view that the state needs to be reduced, to be minimized. The conservative economist Robert Barro of Harvard University and the Hoover Institution put it most bluntly:

> One attraction of tax cuts and deficits is that they starve the government of revenue and thereby promote spending restraint. This worked particularly well in the 1980s. The Reagan tax reductions were a proclamation that the growth in government had to stop—and, with something of a lag, that happened from the mid-1980s through the 1990s. . . . [M]ost people's income comes from their skill and effort (or, through inheritance, from the skill and effort of their parents).

> People deserve to keep most of what they have produced and earned, after sharing reasonably in the tax burden for financing a limited government.[11]

In many ways, Barro's comment outlines in brief the basic ideology behind the politics of the tax cuts. The starving of the state is part and parcel of a political philosophy that sees an increase in the extent to which the market—and therefore not public, but private interests—control many, if not most, of the production and supply of public goods and services (school vouchers are one example of this). But the reality of the implications of a social policy driven by low taxes is never highlighted by any of these thinkers or writers. Take California, a state that passed Proposition 13 in 1978 which says that property taxes cannot be greater than 1 percent of the actual sales price on real estate with a limited increase of 2 percent per year. Although the tax was clearly something that most homeowners supported—and still do, it still has a support rating of 60 percent in the state—the benefits flowed to corporations whose property taxes on land and buildings are under-assessed and therefore drain the state, and its municipalities, of essential tax dollars.[12] California now faces a $38 billion deficit and its public services have suffered—its schools are consistently ranked in the bottom half of the nation when it comes to spending per-student.

Why people accept this situation is a crucial question that needs to be asked. For one thing, there is an ideological explanation. Taxes themselves are not seen as public goods and services, but as redistributive mechanisms to those that do not deserve it—i.e., the poor—or as funding an ever-expanding state and government waste. This is, in part, the product of the rhetoric of the Reagan administration and its attack on welfare. But there has also been a general consensus in the media—one that has become almost universally accepted—that government programs are inherently inefficient and never benefit those that they intent to help. This negative view of government programs is partly due to a certain ideology that has been nurtured by conservative think tanks, writers and politicians for more than three decades. In this sense, the middle class in America sees fewer of its interests in common with the lower class, even though this is clearly not the case.[13]

As this divide has increased—especially as the racialization of this divide also has increased—the largely white middle class sees the social cost of promoting more equality through taxation as increasingly unfair since it sees itself as shouldering much of this burden, never mind the fact that the middle class, too, has been affected by falling incomes and will increasingly see a slide in their own quality of life and the public institutions around them. This ideological explanation translates into a political reality where the lower classes are largely disenfranchised and the middle and upper classes would prefer to keep their incomes safe from taxation and have little interest in an increase in social equality and do not see the deteriorating quality of their public services as being connected with dwindling tax revenues. Either way, this cleavage between the lower and middle classes is politically debilitating since the Democratic Party sees its traditional constituency of the working poor and middle class workers with divergent political interests even though they have more in common with each other than either of them do with the wealthy. The fact is that fighting for improved public services and worker protections of all kinds are things that both the working poor and the

middle class share as common interests. The problem remains articulating a political message that bridges this divide.

This reorientation of American democracy puts markets and private interest over that of the public interest. Indeed, this has been the mainstay of American public life, but the new phase of this trend threatens to make it a more permanent reality. The reality of this situation can be seen most explicitly in the rise in economic inequality in the United States. The income tax was started in 1914 as a "class tax," one that took from the wealthy and redistributed to the rest of society. This turned into a "mass tax" during the Second World War to accrue monies for the war effort. However, it is precisely the notion of class that has been allowed to drop out of the discussion. Class is at the center of the tax cut debate because, as Barro incorrectly states, it is not the case that wealthy people are the ones that "produce" and therefore "earn" what they receive in terms of income. Capitalism is an economic system that produces profits from social labor; the fact that corporate CEOs make more than 400 times the income of the workers that actually produce the products and services can hardly be justified through an argument based along the lines of earning one's pay. This may be an extreme example, but all one needs to do is look at any corporation that develops, say, new technologies. Most, if not all, new technologies are developed in labs and research departments by Ph.D.s or other highly-skilled researchers earning middle income salaries whereas owners earn profits and income that are exponentially higher.

What this discussion points to is that the very meaning of democracy in America is being transformed, perhaps transmogrified is a better term. In place of public concerns and the public interest, it is private interest that has now become paramount in social policy. Whereas the general character of the American welfare state in the post-war period implicitly recognized that political democracy and political equality are practically meaningless without some degree of economic equality and that capitalism as an economic system had serious deleterious effects on society, we now see an institutional transformation where the welfare state is being rolled back to allow the market once again—as in the 19th century—to operate freely irrespective of its social costs. The peculiar caste of American liberalism has typically been seen as strongly Lockean: private property and the ability to accumulate property indefinitely and, therefore, wealth, has always been its backbone. But there have also been other aspects of liberalism: those that stood up for the unpropertied and those whose interests were not served by the free activities of those who owned private property. Indeed, the expansion of American liberalism came not—as neoconservatives have been arguing in recent years—from the ability of individuals to own property and pursue an "American dream," but rather from labor unions and working people that pushed for democratic reforms in the economy, the state and society.[14] Democracy is now being translated into a laissez-faire libertarian reality: as the organization of the entirety of society around the pivot of self-interest subject to minor legal restraints by a minimal state.

Bankrupting the state is therefore a primary aim of the conservative revolution. The very core of any substantive democracy, the public sphere, has slowly eroded through the further separation between state, society and economy, a separation made initially by Locke and then

intensified by revolutionary thinkers like Thomas Paine. But American democracy was not initially grounded in Lockean notions of liberalism as writers such as Louis Hartz have insisted. Rather, it was the tradition of *republicanism* that informed the American Revolution and the early vision of the kind of democracy and society that it would usher in. In this sense, American democracy was initially concerned with the preservation of the public good through political institutions that were publicly accountable; it was not self-interest and the accumulation of private property that initially informed broad sections of the American citizenry. But throughout American political history, there has been a real tension between this tradition of republicanism and its emphasis on the public good and Lockean liberalism that places emphasis on private property and a liberal political order insisting on the separation the political and economic spheres. Thinkers like William Graham Sumner in the 19th century and, more recently, Milton Friedman, have interpreted American democracy through the lens of individual liberty and, therefore, as economic and political liberalism, a position grounded in the individual and not in a conception of the public.

Progressive alternatives to the tax cuts need to be articulated. A tax system that is as indecipherable and impenetrable as that in the United States requires serious reform. However, this does not mean eliminating tax revenues through tax cuts. Taxes on wealth would be much more effective than taxes on income since inequality has risen most in terms of wealth and not in terms of income.15 In this way, the place where social inequality is most intense—in the unequal distribution of wealth—would be the place where redistribution would be concentrated. Wealth inequality between households means a disparity in the ability to buy a home, is more "likely to be better able to provide for its children's educational and health needs, live in a neighborhood characterized by more amenities and lower levels of crime, have greater resources that can be called upon in times of economic hardship, and have more influence in political life."16

But even more, the central problem—and one that would no doubt capture the attention of much of the electorate—would be to advocate job growth through government stimulus. What the Democrats in Washington should be pushing for in place of simply smaller tax cuts is an expansion in government programs that provide both public services *and* employment. Education, health care as well as transportation infrastructure are specific examples. Aside from being excellent opportunities for the state to create useful and dearly needed public services, they would also create well-paying jobs for large segments of the population. These are programs that have actually worked in the past and today require more serious attention in part because they are in stark opposition to the supply-side policies that the Bush administration has been pushing. Indeed, the empirical evidence for job growth resulting from increased consumer spending is extremely weak compared to that of state and federal programs.17

A responsible left program needs to counter the ideology that currently hampers economic policy and move toward policies that will capture the interests of working people and connect their concerns with broader public programs at the state and federal level. This has not happened for a variety of reasons, one of which can be located in the general ideological view

of the contemporary left and its attitude toward the state. In many ways, this is a product of the 1960s and the New Left which was overtly hostile toward the state. From anarchist-inspired movements to the Arendtians and the emphasis on communitarianism over what was generally seen as the coerciveness of the state—all of which were quite respectable positions on the left in the 1960s—the New Left promulgated a general political view that was in opposition to the state, not merely in practice, but in theory as well.18 The New Left's attack on the state left liberal Democrats with few allies when conservatives took power in 1980 with their own anti-state agenda. The state programs of the Roosevelt and Johnson administrations seem utopian now in the present context and the left has itself to blame in part for the lack of political and ideological support for the state and it has no practical institutional alternatives to the neoconservative vision that is emerging as present reality.

Even more, there was also—beginning in the early 1970s—an effort by big business to clamp down on labor unions and also begin a campaign of political activism themselves to help stem the tide of anti-business sentiment whipped up during the 1960s. This is where institutions such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation got started and by the end of the decade, they had succeeded in electing a president with their own ideological perspective.

As a result of these different political trends, the Bush tax cuts will be able to push further a liberalized economic order that at the same time promotes economic inequality and the concentration of power in the hands of the few at the expense of the many, whether it be through wealth, property, or media control. This agenda goes against the grain of much of Western political thought which constantly repeats the injunction against extreme inequalities in property and wealth. From Plato and Aristotle through Locke, Smith, Hegel, Tocqueville and Dewey, among so many others, gross social inequalities have been seen as a major threat to the common good and a democratic polity. More and more, the republican strain in American politics is being eroded and the move toward a democracy based on the foundation of private interest is being increasingly privileged. Such a reconfigured democracy will see the roll back of the institutions and policies that have helped those disadvantaged by the economy; it will increase economic inequalities as well as inequalities in quality of life; and, in the end, it will affect the way that political power is distributed in the United States. The Bush tax cuts are therefore more complex and even more dangerous than initially meets the eye, and it is the very structure of American democratic culture and governance that hangs in the balance.

Notes

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1 Grover Norquist on NOW in conversation with Bill Moyers, transcript at: http://www.pbs.org/now/printable/transcript_norquist_print.html. It must be said that there is also a bit of hysteria mixed in with this rhetoric. Norquist again: "Guys with guns will show up if you don't pay your taxes and take that money from you. And I think that we want in order to have a free society to have as little as possible done coercively." (Ibid.)

2 David Cay Johnston, “Very Richest’s Share of Income Grew Even Bigger, Data Show,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2003.

3 See Laura D’Andrea Tyson, “Tax Cuts for the Rich Are Even More Wrong Today,” *Business Week Online* at: http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/02_27/b3790053.htm.

4 See Claudio Katz, Vincent Mahler and Michael Franz, “The Impact of Growth and Distribution in Capitalist Countries: A Cross National Study,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 77, no. 4, 1983.

5 Sven Steimo, “Why Tax Reform? Understanding Tax Reform in its Political and Economic Context,” http://stripe.colorado.edu/%7Esteinmo/reform.html.

6 *Grundrisse zu Vorlesungen über die Staatswirtschaft* quoted in George E. McCarthy, *Classical Horizons: The Origins of Sociology in Ancient Greece* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003).

7 *The Pursuit of Inequality*, p. 3 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

8 “Socking It to the States,” p. 12 *The Nation*, June 9, 2003.

9 See David Francis, “Bush Tax Cuts Widen US Income Gap,” *The Christian Science Monitor* and *Common Dreams* at: www.commondreams.org/headlines01/0523-02.htm.

10 Of course, there really is no such thing as a truly free market since there is always some form of corporate welfare or tariffs that benefit corporations. The key issue that should be emphasized is that any regulation that potentially helps working people is attacked whereas those regulatory bodies and policies that help capital are promoted or maintained.

11 “There’s A Lot to Like About Bush’s Tax Plan,” p. 28, *Business Week*, February 24, 2003.

12 See Mark Baldassare, “How the West Is Taxed,” Op-Ed Section *The New York Times*, June 27, 2003.

13 See William Julius Wilson, *The Bridge Over the Racial Divide: Rising Inequality and Coalition Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

14 For an excellent statement of this position, see Karen Orren, *Belated Feudalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

15 See Edward N. Wolff, *Top Heavy: The Increasing Inequality of Wealth in America and What Can Be Done About It* (New York: The New Press, 2002).

16 Edward N. Wolff, “Racial Wealth Disparities,” p. 7 *Jerome Levy Institute of Economics Public Policy Brief*, no. 66, 2001.

17 See Jeff Madrick “Economic Scene,” *The New York Times*, July 10, 2003.

18 Sadly, this is still a thriving view among leftist thinkers. See the recent “Rosa Luxemburg Debate” concerning the state in *New Politics*, vol. VIII, 2002 no. 4; vol. IX, 2002, no. 1 and no. 2.

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American Landscape: Lies, Fears, and the Distortion of Democracy In Memory of My Student: Rute Moleiro

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

Lying has always been part of politics. Traditionally, however, the lie was seen as a necessary evil that those in power should keep from their subjects. Even totalitarians tried to hide the brutal truths on which their regimes rested. This disparity gave critics and reformers their sense of purpose: to illuminate for citizens the difference between the way the world appeared and the way it actually functioned. In the aftermath of the Iraqi War, however, that sense of purpose has become imperiled along with the trust necessary for maintaining a democratic discourse. The Bush administration has boldly proclaimed the legitimacy of the lie, the irrelevance of trust, while the mainstream media has essentially looked the other way.

Not since the days of Senator Joseph McCarthy has such purposeful misrepresentation, such blatant lying, permeated the political culture of the United States. It has now become clear to all except the most stubborn that the justification for war against Iraq was not simply based on "mistaken" interpretations, or "false data," but on sheer mendacity. Current discussions among politicians and investigators focus almost exclusively on the false assertion made in sixteen words of a presidential speech that Saddam sought to buy uranium for his weapons of mass destruction in Africa. The forest has already been lost for the trees. It has all become a matter of faulty intelligence by subordinates rather than purposeful lying by those in authority. CIA officials have, however, openly stated that they were pressured to make their research results support governmental policy. Secretary of State Colin Powell has still not substantiated claims concerning the existence of weapons of mass destruction that he made in his famous speech to the United Nations. Other important members of the Bush inner circle have openly admitted that that the threat posed by Iraq was grossly exaggerated even though emphasizing it served to build a consensus for war. They have nonchalantly verified what critics have always known: that American policy was propelled by thoughts of an Iraqi nation "swimming in oil," control over four rivers in an arid region, throwing the fear of the western God into Teheran and Damascus, and establishing an alternative military presence to what once existed in Saudi Arabia. The Bush administration has chastised none of them and criticisms by politicians stemming from the Democratic Party have been tempered to the point of insignificance. "Leaders" of the so-called opposition party obviously fear being branded disloyal.

As they quake in their boots and wring their hands, however, issues concerning the broader justification of the war have disappeared entirely from the widely read right-wing tabloids like *The New York Post* and, at best, retreated to the middle pages of more credible newspapers. Enough elected politicians in both parties, scurrying for cover, now routinely make sure to note

that their support for the war did not rest on the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Rarely mentioned is that the lack of such weapons, combined with the inability to find proof of links between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, invalidates the claim that Iraq actually posed a national security threat to the United States. Everyone in the political establishment now points to humanitarian motives. For the most part, however, such concerns were not upper-most in their minds *then* and there is little reason to believe that they believed them decisive for the public opinion of the American public: human rights indeed became championed by self-styled "realists" like Paul Wolfowitz and Henry Kissinger—whose reputations were previously based on denying them—only when claims concerning the imperiled national interests of the United States were revealed as vacuous.

President Bush and members of his cabinet may now insist that the weapons will ultimately be found, with luck perhaps just before the next election, and the links to Al Qaeda will soon be unveiled. But this is already to admit that the evidence did not exist when the propaganda machine began to roll out its arguments for war. The administration had untold intellectual resources from which to learn that the United States would not be welcomed as the liberator of Iraq and that serious problems would plague the post-war reconstruction. But the administration wasn't interested: it was content to forward its position *and then* find information to back it up. This indeed begs two obvious questions that are still hardly ever asked by the mainstream media: Would the American public have supported a war against Iraq *under those circumstances* and, perhaps more importantly, did this self-induced ignorance about conditions in Iraq help produce the current morass in which billions of dollars have been wasted and, seemingly every day, another few young American soldiers are being injured or killed?

Millions of dollars were wasted by a special prosecutor on investigating false allegations of financial impropriety by Bill and Hillary Clinton. Impeachment proceedings were begun following the revelations of an affair between the then president and an intern. The media was up in arms and its champions still pat themselves on the back for their role in bringing about the Watergate hearings. When it comes to the chorus of untruth perpetrated over Iraq, which brought a nation into war with the resulting loss of lives and resources, it seems the public interest is best served by "bi-partisan" committees and a submissive press. Just as the Republican Party has been flagrant in its refusal to rationally justify its war of "liberation," which is leaving an increasingly sour taste in the mouths of occupiers and occupied alike, the centrist Democratic Leadership Council made famous by Bill Clinton is now warning the public that—with the recent surge in the polls of Governor Howard Dean—its party is on the verge of being taken over by a "far left" intent upon opposing tax cuts, introducing "costly" social programs, and criticizing the foreign policy of the Bush administration.

Leading members of the DLC poignantly ask whether the Democrats wish "to vent or govern" and when questioned whether the current disarray in which the party finds itself was a product of Republican success or Democratic blunders, Senator Evan Bayh of Indiana, chairman of the organization, responded that it was a matter of "assisted suicide." Forgotten was the congressional election of November 2002 in which, by every serious account, it was the

inability of the Democratic Party to offer any meaningful alternative to the policy of President Bush that led to the most disastrous non-presidential year losses in American history. It doesn't seem to matter that the "bi-partisan" candidates like Joseph Lieberman, who refuse to offer a coherent alternative on domestic and foreign policy issues, are not catching on with the American public. It also doesn't seem to matter that the proposed tax cuts work against the interests of the party's own constituency, that social welfare programs would cost a fraction of the billion dollars a month spent in Iraq, and that the current foreign policy is undermining respect for the United States throughout the world. Ignored is the way in which the Democratic Party—the party of FDR, Bobby Kennedy, and Paul Wellstone—has become a joke on the mid-night talk shows. And, all the while, the "liberal" media nods its head and counsels prudence. Senator Bayh has no clue: as it now stands, the Democratic Party can neither "vent" *nor* "govern." Democrats should worry about their image—especially since they don't have one.

The United States is ever more surely appearing less like a functioning democracy in which ideologically distinct parties and groups debate the issues of the day than a one-party state ruled by shifting administrative factions. Free speech exists, but to have a formal right and to make substantive use of it is a very different matter. Consensus and bi-partisanship are becoming increasingly paranoid preoccupations of the media whose range of debate is becoming narrowed to that between humpty and dumpty. Noam Chomsky may not be everyone's taste, but his little collection of interviews *9-11* (New York: Seven Stories Press) was *the* best-selling work on that terrible event: when was the last time you saw him interviewed on mainstream media? It is the same with Barbara Ehrenreich, Frances Fox Piven, and any number of other radical or progressive public figures. Every now and then, of course, Cornel West may pop up for an interview on MSNBC, there are still a few critical editorialists like Paul Krugman in *The New York Times* and Robert Scheer in *The Los Angeles Times,* and Sean Penn can still pay for a full page advertisement to express his critical views on the war. There are even a few democrats like Barbara Lee (D-CA), and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) who have spoken their mind and now, perhaps feeling a groundswell from below, Al Gore has challenged the veracity of the Bush Administration. Nevertheless, their voices certainly don't dominate what conservatives and right-wing pundits—ever ready to view themselves as the victim of the system they control—castigate as the "liberal" media.

The situation brings to mind the vision of a society dominated by what Herbert Marcuse once termed "repressive tolerance": a world in which establishmentarians can point to the rare moment of radical criticism to better enjoy the reign of an overwhelming conformity. The evidence is everywhere: CNN is only a minor player when compared with the combined power of television news shows with huge audiences hosted by mega-celebrities—still relatively unknown in Europe—like Rush Limbaugh, Bill O'Reilly, and Pat Robertson. Belief in the reactionary character of the American public has generated a self-fulfilling prophecy: the public gets the shows it wants that, in turn, only strengthen the original prejudices. Edward R. Murrow, so courageous in his resistance to the hysteria of the 1950s, may often be invoked by the "fourth estate," but that invocation is merely symbolic.

Hardly a word is said any longer about the skepticism of millions who participated in the mass

demonstrations that rocked the United States or how the mainstream media criticism of Tony Blair has transformed the English political landscape. One criterion for judging democracy is the plurality of views presented to the public. That is because the number of views expressed usually reflects the number of political choices from which the public can choose. It is striking to reflect upon the range of perspectives expressed during the era of Progressivism, the New Deal, and the 1960s. By the same token, however, the attempt to constrict civil liberties in moments of crisis has been a fundamental trend of American history. Thus, in the current context, it is chilling to consider the narrowing of debate over the legitimacy of a terrible war to sixteen words made in a presidential speech, an increasingly corrupt evaluation of policy options, and a growing inability of the American public to grasp the distrust its present government inspires elsewhere.

A current Pew Poll of more than forty-four countries, directed by former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, shows that distrust of the United States has grown in an exceptionally dramatic fashion in each of them. This includes sensitive nations like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Indonesia where unfavorable ratings of the United States have gone from 36% in the summer of 2002 to 83% in May of 2003. The “streets” of Europe and, more importantly, the Arab world have been lost. Perhaps they will be regained at a future time. But the numbers in this poll express anger at a basic reality. With its new strategy of the “pre-emptive strike” buttressed by a $400 billion defense budget, bigger than that of the next eighteen nations put together, the United States has rendered illusory the idea of a “multi-polar world.” It has become the hegemon amid a world of subaltern states and it has no need to listen or debate. The difference between truth and falsehood no longer matter. There remains only the fact of victory, the fall of Saddam Hussein, and the bloated self-justifications attendant upon what Senator J. William Fulbright, the great critic of the Vietnam War, termed “the arrogance of power.”

Americans have traditionally tended to rally around the president in times of war. But this war, according to the president, has no end in sight. A new department of “homeland security” is being contemplated and the civil liberties of citizens are imperiled. Justification is supplied by manipulative and self-serving “national security alerts” in which the designation of danger shifts from yellow to orange to red and then back again without the least evidence being presented regarding why a certain color was chosen and why it was changed. The bully pulpit of the president, as Theodore Roosevelt called it, can go a long way in defining the style of national discourse and a sense of what is acceptable to its citizenry. This is where leadership asserts itself. Nevertheless, precisely on this question of leadership for which President Bush has received such lavish praise, he is weakest.

Beyond all social policy concerns, or disagreements over any particular issue of foreign policy, this president is presiding over a newly emerging culture in which truth is subordinate to power, reason is the preserve of academics, paranoia is hyped, and know-nothing nationalism is celebrated. No longer is the constructive criticism of genuine democratic allies taken seriously: better to rely on a corrupt “coalition of the willing” whose regimes have been bribed, whose economies have been threatened, and whose soldiers have been exempt from fighting

this unending war on terror. There is little critical self-reflection and not the hint of an apology for its conduct in the weeks before the war broke out. It is dangerous to underestimate the moral high ground that has been squandered since 9/11. The question for other nations is this: how to trust the liar whose arrogance is such that he finds it unnecessary to conceal the lie?

Democracy remains elusive in Iraq, and Afghanistan is languishing in misery while the creation of new threats to the national security of the United States is being undertaken right now. Iran trembles. Syria, too. And there is always Cuba or North Korea. The enemy can change in the blink of an eye. The point about arbitrary power is, indeed, that it is arbitrary. What happens once the next lie is told and the next gamble is made? It is perhaps useful to think back to other powerful nations whose leaders liked to lie and loved to gamble—and who won and won and won again until finally they believed their own lies and gambled once too often.

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Whither Independence? Iraq in Perspective: From Despotism to Occupation

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

I

There has been nearly unanimous consensus among Iraqis that a new age of possible progress and prosperity has dawned upon their battered and war-fatigued country with the downfall of Saddam Hussein on April 9th. However, much had tainted this rosy image, and much more could still mar the outcome. A principal factor has been the highly incompetent and nonchalant manner in which the U.S.-U.K. occupying forces have conducted themselves: one wonders if this is a result of sheer imperial arrogance, or ignorance of the region, or a combination of both. None of the above reasons is excusable in any way, of course. When a disproportionate U.S. force decimated Saddam Hussein's two infamous sons, Uday and Qusay, and their few companions and then showed their battered images to the world, two messages may be read therefrom. First, the U.S. will absolutely contravene every mode of rational, moral, ethical and reasonable behavior to make their point and achieve success (in their own assessment). Why did they not arrest these two criminals and have them justly tried in Iraqi courts? Second, U.S. policy planners have an inveterate attachment to change through force. The lessons from the 20th century are aplenty (as the Hiroshima anniversary, amongst others, adequately reminds us), and the difference now is of volume and rate rather than quality.

Those of us who vehemently opposed the launch of an immoral, unjust and illegal war have to seriously address now the occupation: not in a romantic, knee-jerk oppositional fashion—which has become commonplace among western as well as Arab oppositionists to U.S. imperialist plans—but in a calculated manner that puts the interests of the Iraqi people uncompromisingly at the forefront. Thus, what are the facts on the ground, and what may be done? In what follows, I am more interested in raising questions than providing simple, speculative answers. What deeply angers and pains me are the cold as well as condescending views offered by Arabs or Americans, alike, when it comes to dealing with Iraq. To these two groups, governments and populace, Iraq seems to be a possession, and each has an opinion on what to do with it. Very little attention is given to the how to achieve results, which leads me, and a few others, to believe that none is really interested in the well-being of Iraqis.

II

The U.S. has waged the war against Iraq in spite of unprecedented worldwide public pressure against it. The pretexts for the war, Saddam Hussein's possession of Weapons of Mass

Destruction (WMD) and his alleged link to al-Qaeda, have been in dispute from the very beginning. Four months after the war and neither a trace of WMD exists, nor a hint of a link to al-Qaeda terrorists, rather an unraveling of a series of apocryphal stories penned by elected and unelected officials in the U.S. and U.K. governments with the sole purpose of manipulating public opinion prior to waging war. Now the sad fact is that such despicable tactics—and the list could be long—have placed the fallen despot, Saddam Hussein, and his regime in a rather romantic-heroic position among many a person within the Arab world, the third world and elsewhere. Rather than containing terrorist groups and cutting their lifelines, U.S. actions have given life to a litany of fragmented, but ruthless, reactionary groups intent on inflicting damage on all symbols of modernity—and certainly not limited to the U.S. and its interests.

To this day, many cannot fathom the horrific and criminal nature of the deposed Iraqi regime; and U.S. tactics in Iraq have allowed people to compare to and contrast with a fictitious version of Saddam Hussein's reign.

Every visitor to Iraq speaks of war-torn cities, devastation, dilapidated services and war- and sanctions-fatigued populace, on the one hand, and the existence of monstrous, grand palaces and edifices, on the other: All being the direct outcome of 30+ years of authoritarian rule and 12 years of the most suffocating (U.S.-U.K. instigated and propelled) economic sanctions ever imposed. But Iraqis returning for the first time after decades of exile have observed one thing of significant importance in the midst of the rubble: *people feel free and hopeful*. There is a satisfying, inner happiness one feels when free that can only be understood if one's freedom has been curtailed: no explanation, lengthy or terse, would do justice. This is what precisely gives one hope for a better tomorrow. Alas, both are slowly being nibbled at, and the prospects are unclear.

Four months after the fall of Saddam Hussein's hierarchical structure of governance, basic municipal and civic services are at an appallingly low level. The work force has no work and only portion of it has started receiving salaries, some of which were given in useless currency that further aggravated an already drained populace.[1] Security is deteriorating mainly in Baghdad and environs, while most other cities function much better. Further, the rumor mill is grinding absolutely anything imaginable, which only contributes to increasing the level of uncertainty in the country. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) promulgated actions that could only worsen a very unsettled situation, namely: dissolving the Army and affiliated organizations, as well as the Ministry of Information, thus rendering more than 250,000 without recourse to any source of livelihood. Furthermore, the so-called process of de-Baathification is purely ideological in nature—principally fueled by the hawks in the U.S. Administration and their Iraqi underlings, most notably Ahmed Chalabi, Kanan Makiya and Co.

In a country where membership to the Baath party became the only means for advancement for many, this tactic is bound to engulf the country in a process of vilification and counter-vilification based on personal, rather than objective, accounts. What would be more a appropriate and just recourse is to judiciously investigate the role of senior Baath functionaries: trying before the law all those guilty of crimes against the people, and pardoning

those whose hands were untainted. A national heeling and reconciliation process is essential if the tragedies and horrors of the past 30 years are to be constructively addressed, and avoid institutionalizing recrimination and guilt by association. The latter is likely to take the country down a dangerous spiral, which accentuates antiquated tribal rule—that Saddam Hussein himself tried to resuscitate in the latter part of the nineties to further buttress his reign. Iraq's political parties must resist this and instead press for just trials and a process of reconciliation. Interestingly, the majority of Iraqis seems to favor this approach as evinced by personal and televised accounts (albeit not polled scientifically), thus presenting yet another hopeful scenario for Iraq and its people *if* left alone.

Events indicate that the U.S. invading-cum-occupying forces, while possessing formidable fire power, have seemingly less than formidable planning and analytical powers. Most echelons of the decision-making process within the U.S. government had apparently been surprised by the run of events. More surprisingly, no contingency plans had been prepared for the (speedy) fall of Saddam Hussein's government and the ensuing dissolution of ministries, state organizations, the police, etc. What would a rational person expect would happen if a highly centralized structure of governance dependent on a ruthless social policy grounded in chauvinistic and sectarian politics suddenly collapsed? Why, then, have U.S. planners and their research centers and institutes been unable to anticipate at least a general framework for dealing with events?

The sanctions-fatigued, repressed Iraqis with hardly adequate access to basic food requirements, never mind super-dooper search engines, computing power, etc., could—and would—have done much better than the functionaries of the CPA. It is also worthy of note that this just-do-and-wait-to-see-what-happens is essentially the same obscurantism governing doctrinaire religious teachings (of whatever color): a complete and utter absence of critical thought. This behavior fundamentally stems from what the U.S. feels itself to be: the unparalleled imperial power of our age. Thus, ideology is fundamentally and intrinsically at the core of all that is happening, and the media have performed a compelling job of *dis*informing the U.S. populace and effectively contributing to a brainwashing campaign at an astounding rate. A pressing question presents itself: Will the U.S. populace seek to change this through ballot boxes in 2004? Will they come to really understand that they would not be hated in the world if they actually thought of the rest of the world on an equal footing and genuinely divorced themselves from condescending attitudes that are so prevalent in almost every segment of class, profession, ethnic and religious background?

III

Iraq is being constantly portrayed as a fragile formation of ethno-religious groups, essentially violent and vying for power. Is there a country on this planet that is not an amalgamation of ethno-religious groups? Even Israel as a Jewish State comprises various ethnicities, and hence is heterogeneous.

Modern Iraq has been a staunchly secular country where the separation of religion from the state has been a fact of life—respected and adopted by all, and certainly by its Shiite and Sunni religious establishments. While not a phenomenon at the popular level, ethno-sectarian chauvinism has been institutionalized by the state since its inception: the progeny of the British concocted Cox-al-Naqeeb plan laying down the foundation for the pyramidal power structure in the nascent government of Iraq in 1921. To ensure reliance on foreign forces, state power was entrusted to a minority elite, with a clear segregation of the largesse among the vying groups: Officers of the erstwhile Ottoman Army, Sunni landowners and religious notables, and a handful of Shiite landowners and religious notables and Jewish and Christian businessmen.[2] The association was entrenched in the belonging to a group, ethnic, religious or sectarian, rather than to the country Iraq. It may be moot to question whether that was not a reflection of the lack of a national identity; however, history indicates that the inhabitants of Iraq had strongly identified themselves with the land of Mesopotamia, and their association has since been with it rather than strictly speaking the tribe, or religion or sect.

1958, marking the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of the first republic, ushered in a new period where Iraqis identified themselves as citizens and not according to tribal, religious or sectarian divides. The modern political formations, Communist or Pan-Arab—principally the Baath party, have been clearly secular and encompassed all sectors of society along ideological rather than ethno-sectarian divisions. The Baath party slowly degenerated since Saddam Hussein became the “strong man” in the early seventies, and in the summer of 1979 he consummated his power by annihilating the leftist wing within the party (led by Abdel Khaleq al-Samarai, who was summarily purged with more than 50 of his comrades, most of whom were executed by Saddam and his underlings). During the 1980s Saddam Hussein embarked on entrenching a family-based rule, and the remnants of the party had become a façade to one of the darkest periods of Iraq’s history. In the 1990s, with the help of the sanctions, the government had further degenerated into a brutal mafia-style repression against any modicum of opposition. The inhabitants of the south, mostly Shias, paid a particularly heavy price as a result of their uprising following the 1991 Gulf War. Prior to 1991 the government had forcibly transferred Arabs from the south to the Kurdish north, especially oil-rich Kirkuk, with the objective of creating a new demographic reality. Moreover, a diligent student of the British colonizers, Saddam Hussein fervently adopted an approach favoring one or other Sunni clan for wealth and governmental positions, and continually pitted one tribe against the other. This *ipso facto* created a situation whereby those minority tribes had come to associate their comfortable status with the regime’s existence.

The inhabitants of the south, on the other hand, have long been suppressed not because of their Shia faith *per se*, but because that region had always been a source of resistance against central authority. The south of Iraq, one of the richest cultural hot spots anywhere, has long been characteristically secular and had been the birthplace of Iraqi communism as well as the Arab socialist movement—including the Baath party. Hence, the brutal repression and suppression inflicted on the inhabitants of the south by Saddam Hussein’s regime simply began as a measure against a people demanding freedom, then metamorphosed into a sectarian identity following the disappearance of all secular opposition within Iraq. Saddam Hussein’s

well-practiced technique of punishment had been collective and decisively long term: cut off the livelihood of any group of people who dares pose a threat to his rule. Thus, the Marsh Arabs, descendants of Mesopotamia's first dwellers, have been dealt a most severe blow to their very livelihood and existence for demanding "bread and freedom": the marshes were drained, and fertile agricultural land was turned arid because the Tigris had purposefully been redirected away from it.

It is worthwhile pointing out that while the south had been brutally suppressed, not-an-insignificant number of the security apparatus torturers did actually come from the south too—with the top security echelons coming from the family mafia and affiliated subordinates. Such is the nexus of victim and torturer under Saddam Hussein's reign of terror: entwined to the nth degree.

IV

Why, then, do Arab satellite TV stations and most Arab journals maliciously propagate an image of every event in Iraq taking place along sectarian lines? Al-Jazeera, in spite of clarifications and corrections from Iraqis inside Iraq, insists on calling the pockets of local fighting as "national resistance led by the Sunnis." In many a program where audience from Baghdad, Cairo and Beirut talk about the situation in Iraq, you here one rhetorical statement after another from Cairo and Beirut devoid of genuine sympathy for the plight of the Iraqis and any concrete plan of how the Arabs wish to assist the Iraqis: Thus the strong backlash within a significant portion of Iraqis, educated or otherwise all across the country, against the manner in which Arab governments, press, intellectuals and even populace had sought to represent the situation in Iraq under Saddam Hussein's rule and now. Iraqis feel disgusted by the hypocrisy practiced by many an Arab: prior to 9 April, 2003 Iraq's children were a mere slogan for Arabs as the murderous sanctions torn them asunder, and as years of political repression sought, but failed, to create a docile populace. Most Iraqis contend that no progress could emerge in the Arab world if internal repression persists, and no justification should be given to any form of authoritarian rule, as the history of modern Iraq has amply shown: a rich nation, and highly-educated people literally reduced to selling their belongings to rummage for food for their offspring.[3]

Iraq may now present a scenario for the Arabs to follow. No one in Iraq is oblivious to U.S. reasons for waging war on Iraq, but they recognized their inability to stand against the U.S. mammoth—since neither Europe nor any other state dared oppose the U.S.. The split between the dormant left inside of Iraq and their comrades outside specifically addresses this point. They both agreed that no positive change could take place in Iraq while Saddam Hussein's regime was in power, but they differed on the mechanisms for change. Those who lived inside Iraq and were experiencing repression on a daily basis felt that only an outside power could remove the despotic regime. Then, and only then, could work begin to rebuild the country. Hardly any Iraqi welcomed the invading forces, and they all agree that the occupying forces must leave. The collapse of the central government and all its offshoots created a significant power vacuum as well as a security black hole. At the current stage, foreign presence is required to maintain peace and order. The question is how and who should do it? No army in

the world is trained to maintain peace and order among civilians, thus the tragic chaotic scenarios over the past four months. All visitors to Iraq acknowledge that the young American GIs are scared witless, and therefore shoot at everything that moves. This takes us back to questions I posed at the beginning of this article: Are the U.S. planners incompetent, nonchalant or both?

What is clear is that a strict timeline for a speedy withdrawal of U.S. and British forces must be put in place, and at the same time a staunch commitment must be made by the UN for international forces to replace them at once. There should be no lapse between the two as the political volatility in Iraq now is serious. Moreover, the Governing Council appointed by Paul Bremer III, while not the transitory national government that was demanded by the Iraqis, is required to form a united front and work to immediately achieve two goals: restoring peace and security within the country, and restoring the functioning of municipal and governmental activities. Their efficacy will be judged if they achieve these two goals and how quickly. Once this is accomplished, an unequivocal demand for the institution of democratic elections to form a new government must be put in place through a realistic, but non-pliant timeline. Achieving success would require a unified approach by the Council in order to pressure the CPA into accepting Iraqi demand

The support that the world could give Iraqis is by placing pressure on their respective governments to demand that Iraqis receive the reigns of power, peacefully, systemically and quickly. The world has a chance to show that it cannot let the U.S. greyhound loose: it must be tamed.

Notes

1 The 10,000 Dinar note is rumoured to be counterfeit and is thus being accepted at a much lower rate, if at all. Furthermore, prices continue to soar.

2 The religious establishment, as elsewhere, was split between submissive and oppositional.

3 The Arab League in the meeting held in early August by its foreign ministers refused to recognize the Governing Council recently formed in Iraq, and rationalized the decision on the basis that recognition would be tantamount to accepting occupation. According to the charter of the League, UN Security Council resolutions must be accepted and adhered to as well as international treaties. The UN passed Security Council resolution 1483, under U.S. pressure, that basically legitimized the occupation of Iraq and placed the country under the administrative control of the occupying forces. U.S. forces occupy parts of almost every Arab state, kingdom or sheikhdom with the exception of a few, and hence the Arab foreign ministers' talk of not willing to recognize occupation by the U.S. is nothing but hogwash. Moreover, they are in contravention of the very UNSC resolutions that they proclaim to enforce. The real motive for their action lies elsewhere. A genuine change towards democracy in Iraq would threaten all of these illegitimate governments, and thus they have been united in actively opposing any reasonable resolution to the Iraq crisis. They have not even proposed any

alternative to U.S. occupation, nor outlined a “road map” for ending occupation. Moreover, Arab official media continue to portray any escalation in Iraq on religious, sectarian and ethnic bases, and hardly any voice is given to the secular voices that are widely available inside the country. It is worthy of note that the clashes and confrontations with U.S. forces in regions surrounding Baghdad, notably Faluja, have been partly fuelled by religious fundamentalists, shipped to Iraq before and after the invasion of Iraq, bent on destabilizing the country. These deadly confrontations are not supported by most Iraqis and do not represent a form of armed struggle: they are futile violence whose goal is disruption of ordinary life and serves no useful goal: only innocent civilians die as a consequence.

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The Incidental Liberation of Iraq

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

No one in Iraq or the U.S. believes that the primary intention of U.S. military action in Iraq was liberation. Yet, citizens of both nations need to unite to make it happen—Iraqis as an opportunity to avoid neo-colonization and achieve some form of just and democratic self-rule and the U.S. as reparations for a misguided and dangerous preemptive invasion that is likely to exacerbate Middle East violence and instability. The U.S. Left cannot afford to gloat at the blunders of the Bush administration or hope for its failure. The stakes are far too high. The Left has to call upon those Democrats who can summon the courage to chart a new path to liberation, to face up to the deceptions that have brought us to this place, and to avoid the continuing deceptions about reconstruction.

Almost universally, anyone in Baghdad will give you three reasons for the U.S. invasion: Israeli security; control of Iraqi oil; and weakening the Arab world. They appear as three faces of the underlying premise of U.S. policy towards Israeli security—no two Arab nations should equal Israel in military capacity. Iraq, with its oil wealth, had built one of the world's largest armies, had the funds to support others, and Saddam, after 1991, could no longer be trusted to stay in line with U.S. policy towards Israel.

People in the U.S., thanks to the state-supporting media, are far more divided in opinion about the reasons for the U.S. attack on Iraq. Among a list of rationale de jour's, we find: Iraq posed an imminent threat from weapons of mass destruction: Iraq would be an eventual nuclear threat; Saddam had ties to Al-Qaeda.

As the U.S. administration's rationales fade from credibility, into a place between "technically correct" (Rumsfeld) and not "totally outrageous" (Powell), three conclusions are clear.

- Iraqi perceptions of U.S. intentions forge a more convincing logic that connects 9/11 to our invasion and occupation of Iraq. They coincide with the Defense Department's neo-conservatives' position to drain the swamp that breeds terrorism. This logic proceeds from the premise that Islamic terrorism has its base in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Control of Iraq oil cuts off supplies to Palestinian organizations and makes it easier to impose a U.S./Israeli peace.

- There is almost universal sentiment that it is good that Saddam Hussein is gone. Dividing that sentiment are reservations about the illegal and unjustified means to that end; concerns with the U.S. intentions to impose its own regime on Iraq; and worries that the U.S. Office of Coalitional Provisional Authority [OCPA] does not have the competence or will to restore basic services—electricity and water and police protection;

- and the liberation of Iraq, originally incidental to our purpose, has taken on immense importance to end the U.S. march towards endless preemptive war and to prevent an accidental empire whose chief exports are “death and violence” as the solemn ending of Woodward’s book, *Bush at War*, envisions. Far from draining the swamp of terrorism, these outcomes will fill and expand it.

If Iraq is to reach liberation, three impediments, rooted in OCPA’s performance up to present, will have to be removed. First, some degree of normal service and security needs to be restored just to demonstrate OCPA’s competence. Second, OCPA will have the join the rest of us in a world that is gray-hued and not starkly black and white. Third, OCPA will have to end the U.S. hubris that it can liberate Iraq without the aid of the UN and its member states who failed their responsibility.

Competence

People compare OCPA’s performance unfavorably with Saddam’s regime’s in 1991 when electrical power was restored within a month of the end of the war and despite much more damage. At best, eight hours of electrical power are available per day, rotated through the city in 2 hour blocks. This provides inadequate power for cooling Baghdad’s 115o and for pumping clean water. Similarly, people compare the fear they had of Saddam’s secret police and the diffuse fear they have now. Everyone has a story of a family member or neighbor robbed in their home or assaulted in the street. Women face threats from carjacking and sexual assault never known before. In the matters of safety and public services, the general assessment is that things are far worse than ever before. In effect, OCPA has turned all of Baghdad into a U.S. inner city with the variant of occupation military forces who do not speak the residents’ language.

Waleed Shamil, professor of theatre arts at the University of Baghdad, makes the point even as he qualifies the severity of these problems. He thinks back to his eight years of study and teaching and assesses Baghdad’s problems as no worse than the worst neighborhoods of LA at that time.

Imagine any U.S. inner-city with limited electrical power and interruptions of clean water supply; lack of refrigeration; ice available on the black market at high costs in money and time; limited public transportation; the burned out skeletons of cars, trucks, and military vehicles everywhere; crumbling infrastructure everywhere; debris in the streets; thick black smoke in the air coming from fires to dispose of debris; no relief from searing heat until the rains of September; 70 percent unemployment; interrupted income from police, civil service, and military jobs eliminated by OCPA decree; no telephone service; no postal service; and an unprecedented crime wave, then you can understand that it is the patience of the people Baghdad, a city of five million people, and their hope for better times that provide the primary security of U.S. troops. People offered different time lines for the endurance of this store of patience and hope but all acknowledged that the time for OCPA to demonstrate its competence was limited.

A World of Black and White

OCPA is impeded in its effort to restore public services, in part, by the U.S. preference for a policy based on the theology of good and evil and its obsession with the latter. Continuing resistance in Iraq and the attacks upon occupation forces, L. Paul Bremer III, OCPA head, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld attribute to hardcore Sunni and Ba'athist loyalists, al-Qaeda, Iranians, and thugs; always some external enemy to U.S. virtue and "success.

Students and faculty at the University of Baghdad with whom we spoke are adamant that the resistance in Falluja and other places is cultural not political. Men, who are arrested in a public and humiliating manner—face down on the ground with a display of deadly force and then having their hands tied behind their backs—have relatives who feel compelled to avenge the family or tribe dishonored by their treatment. Crackdowns, with more arrests, detentions, and injury to and death of innocent residents, increase the pool of resentment from which resistance emerges. Similarly, the shooting of a U.S. soldier at the University of Baghdad could be more cultural, dealing with the insufficiently respectful treatment of female students, than political in nature as Bremer suggested. As one dean summarized, "We are tired of waiting for respect for ourselves and our nation."

There are many causes of the lack of basic services and the continued resistance, some of them of our own making. To externalize the causes of these problems into people we demonize not only overlooks our part in the problem it delays our getting on with more appropriate solutions.

Hubris

This U.S. theological analysis is the cause and effect of a hubris that is the third and perhaps the most serious impediment to OCPA's work. Having sidestepped and bullied the UN in its build up to the war and having discredited its inspection program as too slow and ineffective, the U.S. now seems reluctant to admit its need for the UN in its reconstruction effort. Indeed, the cup-is-half-full message from Bremer and the Pentagon, for whom he works, calls for satisfaction and pride in what has been done, patience with the remaining tasks, and understanding of the complexities of the work before OCPA. These, of course, are the sorts of attitudes that the U.S. would not tolerate as it picked its fight with Iraq.

OCPA continues to use a dual standard in its work. The University of Baghdad presents one small case of this impediment. Because of one of Bremer's most serious errors, blanket de-Ba'athification. Sami Al-Mudaffar, the newly elected president of the University of Baghdad, faces the problem of dealing with Iraq's premier University's future without some of the administrators who ran things in the past.

Students, faculty, and other administrators distinguish "Saddamis' from other Ba'athists. Saddamis believed in the party in their souls. They informed on students and faculty, put pressure on them to join the party, and withheld travel money, promotions, salary increases, and even teaching assignments unless they did. Some, it is claimed, even had students picked up, detained, tortured, and in some instances killed. The nominal Ba'athist, on the other hand,

joined the party in outward appearances only so as not to impede their careers. They often covered for other colleagues' dissent by lying about matters such as undergoing military training with their students as prescribed. Even these distinctions are not hard and fast but represent the foci of the elliptical orbits of evasion and repression within which faculty and students moved.

They are very interested to see that those officials guilty of serious crimes against others receive lawful punishment. They are just as interested to see those outstanding teachers with only nominal Ba'athist credentials be retained to contribute to the teaching and scholarship of the University. Judging individuals by the characteristics of a group is a gross violation of human rights insists one de-Ba'athified faculty member.

The hubris of de-Ba'athification stands out if applied to Bremer; hubris always employs a double-standard. How could the managing partner of Kissinger Associates be sufficiently "de-Kissingerized" to escape the taint of *realpolitik* without a hint of human values including the support of state terror in Chile and Indonesia? In a particularly relevant policy, Kissinger supported the Iranian Shah's wish of support of the Kurds in their fight against Iraq in the 1970s as part of the grand strategy of the Cold War—Iran with the U.S., Saddam with the Soviets. The policy of the-enemy-of-my-enemy-is-my-friend ended when the Shah decided that he would be friends with Iraq. Kissinger stopped aid to the Kurds and exposed them to retaliation by Iraq. In a statement that helps explain why some regard the Nobel Peace prize winner as an international war criminal, he explained famously that "Covert action should not be confused with missionary work." Similarly, Bremer's record of anti-terror study with the Heritage Foundation and focus on Iran suggests that "anti-terrorism should not be confused with national reconstruction."

The stakes are tremendous. Iraq, a nation of 24 million people, in 1980 was on the threshold of first world development. After three wars and 12 years of sanctions, Baghdad now longs for the standards of a third world country. U.S. occupation has brought the lowest standard of living that Iraqis have known. There is fear that the U.S. will, intentionally or not, diminish Iraq further to the level of Afghanistan.

It is not enough for the U.S. Left to observe all this in hopes of a Bush failure. First of all, the humanitarian crisis that we largely avoided in the war could follow from water borne diseases, food shortages, and violence. Secondly, Iraqis will not permit the U.S. to fail its incidental liberation of Iraq and play out some Kissingeresque geopolitical strategy with its citizens, nation, and institutions. Full-scale armed resistance to occupation without liberation will occur and the U.S. will face suppressing the resistance and maintaining an occupation of Iraq similar to the Israeli policies in its occupied territories. This will benefit no one and undermine the security of Israel and the U.S. The U.S. is unlikely to choose to abandon its intentions of achieving Israel security through control of Iraqi oil revenues, no matter how ill-conceived the means or ill-gotten the goods. As Jefferson said of slavery, we have a wolf by the ears. We may not want to hold it but we know there is danger in letting it go.

An Iraqi policy for the Left would include dealing directly with the impediments to success. Such a policy would:

- Insist on immediate visible signs of good intentions and competence which means
  - immediate tangible signs of progress on the resumption of electrical service throughout the country but especially urban areas;
    - accountability of the large U.S. contractors with responsibility for reconstruction and demand immediate efforts with visible results and assurance that profits and favoritism are not holding up immediate action in this emergency situation; and
  - re-establish the Iraqi military and police as quickly as possible and give them the tasks for security.
- Bring new focus on Israeli security and
  - distinguish between Zionism and Israeli security and explain that the first is antithetical to the second;
  - acknowledge and end forty years of supporting the Israeli policy of military strength greater than any two Arab nations; and
  - acknowledge that the peace in the Middle East runs through Baghdad but has a different starting point than the one we have taken.
    - U.S. policies in Iraq should model new policies toward the Arab world rather than replicate Israeli/Palestinian relationships. This requires
      - a repudiation of past policies that used corruption, civil war, war between states, and coups to weak Arab states hostile to Israel and to maintain control of the region's oil.
- Establish democratic processes of governance and due process of punishment by
  - Turning over to the UN the task of establishing a national government in a truly democratic process that goes beyond giving Iraqis choices among U.S. preferences or manipulation of a new government to achieve the covert purposes of the U.S. invasion of Iraq;
    - This may mean establishing a government that may provide for Israel's security in a manner different from U.S. and Israel's preferences—nuclear disarmament, inspections for weapons of mass destruction, etc.

- preclude from government and public office only those former officials duly tried and found guilty of crimes against Iraqi law or humanity.

· End the sequential obsession with surrogates for elusive terrorists by

- disconnecting Iraq from the war on terror and force our national leaders to admit that they manipulated the nation into fear for its security as a means to pursue other unstated policies;

- ending the obsession with a purge of Ba'athist and other symbols of Saddam; and

- describing U.S. efforts as war reparations;

  - acknowledge the U.S. part in bringing the Ba'athist to power, maintaining Saddam Hussein even through the bloody political purges of the 1960s, and supplying him with biological and chemical weapons material and

- acknowledging the role that the U.S. insistence on the most stringent UN sanctions against Iraq played in reducing the infrastructure.

We need to make the U.S. incidental liberation of Iraq into a deliberate, intentional, and successful international effort and we do not have much time to show our intentions and competence. Baghdad will probably sizzle the entire summer. We can hope, however, that serious discussion and some immediate action can support the hope of Iraqis for improvements to come and cool things off long enough to permit an intentional, effective, international, and genuine liberation of Iraq to begin. While we are doing this, of course, we must also pursue regime change in the U.S.

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Who Are the Palestinians?

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

Who are they, the Palestinians, and who has the right to speak for them? Oppressed nationalities find it difficult to get a hearing because those who pretend to represent them are often political adventurers who merely exploit them—whether for other powers' imperialistic purposes or to vent on imaginary enemies their own hatred of the world. This is true of the Somalis, the Irish, the Bengalis, the Ibos; it is twice as true of the Palestinians because their country happens to lie at the crossroads of a world power struggle. Nowhere else do local enmities serve so many outside masters; nowhere else do foreign interests spread so much confusion about the very identity of the people whom they are pretending to save.

So, first of all let us agree: like most Irish, most Palestinians are not terrorists; but like many Ulstermen or Basques, many Palestinians will condone or even applaud acts of terrorism as long as they lack other means to express what they consider their just grievances, and as long as those grievances continue to be seen as just by others. Let us also agree that their plight is not of their own making; they have been objects of other people's policies for three thousand years.

Palestine, the land of the Philistines, a Semitic people that once was subjugated by Joshua and by David, has retained that name through the centuries as it was conquered by Hittites, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, (1) Christians from the West, Osmanli Turks, and the British. Until recently in modern times it was sparsely settled, mostly by Arab Bedouins, and considered part of Syria. A movement to liberate and unite the Arabs, then under Turkish domination, existed long before the First World War.

Then the British used Arab tribesmen to wrest Palestine, Mesopotamia (Iraq), and Syria from the Turks, promising them"sovereignty" and self-determination. After prolonged uprisings those parts of Syria that lay east of the Jordan River were given to Hashemite sheiks, who thereafter were called kings; the part west of the Jordan River was styled the British Mandate of Palestine and supposed to evolve toward self-government; northern Syria became a French mandate. The terms of the mandates were illegal even by the standards of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which was their covering law. Previously, a unilateral declaration by Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour had designated "Palestine" as a "Jewish homeland"; but at the same time Weizmann and Lord Harlech assured the Arabs that this should not interfere with

Arab aspirations to sovereignty.

What these terms meant or how to reconcile them was never spelled out except in Balfour's memoirs, where he wondered how anybody could have been misled into thinking that they meant anything (2). But on the evidence of contemporary customs and conditions, the Balfour Declaration was consistent with a Jewish immigration rate of 50,000 a year and a ratio of two to one between Muslims and Jews. In 1930, after serious Arab riots, immigration was severely restricted-just when Jews were desperate, not for a homeland but for a place of asylum. At the outbreak of World War II, the population consisted of 456,000 Jews and 1.1 million Muslims; at its end, the census counted 1.143 million Muslims, 583,000 Jews, and 145,000 Christians.

The Holocaust and the war left the Allies with a "disposal problem" in western Europe: nearly 100,000 East European Jews who had been made homeless by persecution and political changes were languishing in displaced-persons camps, fed by charitable contributions and government aid, mostly from the United States which, however, did not lift its own restrictions on immigrants from Eastern Europe. Responding to strong pressures from Zionist organizations—and minding the electoral situation at home—President Truman resolved the problem by agreeing to the foundation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Soviet diplomacy gladly gave its assent, viewing any diminution of the British Empire as so much gain for itself, and hoping to ingratiate itself with both Jews and Arabs.

At first the British wanted to build a base in Haifa because, ironically, they were about to fulfill another Arab demand: to evacuate the base in Alexandria. On the other hand, a White Paper of 1939 also promised independence to Palestine. Weary of Arab terrorism and immediately prompted by Jewish terrorism, the Labour Party government decided to abandon the thankless task of policing the peace between Jews and Arabs. (3) The deal was consummated by a United Nations Security Council resolution (4) the only instrument of international law on which the state of lsrael can base its existence.

It is therefore necessary to remember that the United Nations at that time created not one state but two on the west side of the Jordan: one Jewish and one Arab. The Jewish state so created was totally nonviable: it consisted of three noncontiguous parts encompassing most Jewish settlements and a like number of Arab settlements. Even Ben Gurion, however, accepted this rump territory because at that time he still assumed that Palestine would remain an economic unit where two peoples would be able to develop in symbiosis—a binational state in all but name.

A word about this assumed symbiosis. Not only Jews but Arabs too had come into Palestine, attracted by the higher wages and better working conditions under Jewish employers, or simply by the promise of prosperity that the Jewish immigration and its foreign backers brought to the country. The Jewish labor organization, Histadruth, had seen with alarm how fellow Jews were hiring Arab labor at low wages while Jewish immigrants were jobless. From the early 1920s on, therefore, the Histadruth had been waging a campaign "to fight for places to work." (5) Its strongly nationalistic appeal brought quick success to this campaign: by the 1930s Arabs

worked for Jews mostly in menial positions that Jewish workers would not accept. Even so, a remarkable number of Arabs in Palestine prospered, learned mechanical skills, and went to college, so that former Palestinians now occupy enviable positions in all Arab countries as executives, opinion leaders, professional people, foremen, and skilled workers.

There is no doubt that the socioeconomic upset emanating from Jewish Palestine was one of the reasons for Arab sheiks, kings, and capitalists to fear the establishment of a Jewish state. Another was the threat of Jewish mass immigration and the growth of a new power center that was bound to subvert the status quo in the Middle East. At that time, only twenty years after the Balfour Declaration, Zionism was still considered a tool of British imperialism, and the Mufti of Jerusalem broadcast for Hitler from Berlin during the Second World War. To him, as to many Arabs today, Zionism was the imperialists' base in the Middle East.

A lot of silly arguments have been heard about this catchword, imperialism. Does it apply to Zionism? It is true that Orde Wingate trained the Haganah (Jewish underground defense organization); but another British officer, Glubb Pasha, led the army of Transjordan. And eighty years before these events, Lord Palmerston sponsored the unification of Italy; will anyone therefore charge that Garibaldi was a tool of British imperialism? The Jewish state was the goal of a national conquest; its conflict with Arab states or Arab interests is on the order of national rivalries, and this remains true even if Jews or Arabs or both are allied with imperial powers. At one time the British favored the Jews, but after 1930 they found Zionist presumptions increasingly embarrassing. Zionism exploited British power and then turned against it. The British, in turn, contrary to Lenin's theory of imperialism, did not mean to "exploit" Palestine economically but, as the mandate power, to prohibit the development of Jewish industries.

The United States has invested heavily in Arab oil developments. The charge that it uses Israel to keep the sheiks docile, however, is totally unfounded and, on the face of it, ridiculous. The policy of the oil companies and of the State Department has been consistently pro-Arab unless one defines as pro-Israel any policy not aiming at the destruction of the Jewish state. The responsibility for Israel's preservation, as for some other elements of the status quo the United States is committed to defend, has been a heavy burden. But it is in the nature of empires to be drawn into national border conflicts where their clients have interests, and very often they would rather not have to support them. Far from being used by the Russians or the Americans for their purposes, both Arabs and Jews have deliberately involved their big brothers in their own defense concerns.

Much has been made of the Histadruth's job policy. Obviously, in terms of Lenin's theory of imperialism, Jewish business has not been guilty of exploiting cheap Arab labor; rather, Jewish colonists have been guilty of making Arabs jobless and driving them from their lands. I have to explain here a subtlety of feudal law: *fellahin* can be sold along with the land on which they have been sitting, but the land cannot be sold without them; it cannot be pulled away from under their feet. When the Jewish agency, aware only of capitalist law, bought land from the callous *effendis*, it may honestly have thought that thereby it had acquired the right to expel the *fellahin*, which repeats the story of the "enclosures," well known to readers of Marx's

Capital. As the Phoenicians had done at Carthage and the Athenians in Sicily, the Jews acquired land and Jewish colons "settled" it. This is the original meaning of "colonization." (6)

Notwithstanding Lenin, it may be called an imperialist policy on the part of the nation that hopes to prevail in such a fight for the land. Jewish settlers, who had naively begun to cultivate this ground -including *kibbutzniks* who did so in the name of socialism – wondered why the former owners or tenants of those grounds were firing at them or staging surprise attacks on their innocent children; from the vantage point of the expelled Palestinians, the settlers were usurpers, colonizers, imperialists in flesh and blood, not just the tools of mysterious powers across the sea. (7)

This is the background of the war of 1948, which resulted in Israel's conquest of a contiguous territory (within the boundaries of 1948-1967) and in the Hashemite annexation of territory west of the Jordan River, including part of Jerusalem and such Biblical cities as Bethlehem and Nablus. Perhaps even more important for our present purposes, it resulted in the flight of 600,000 Arabs from their native home (8). In the light of the communal strife that had preceded the British pullout, that flight is totally understandable. A sensible person avoids being in anybody's line of fire, especially in this kind of civil war. The Jewish defense organizations had taken care to project an image of fierceness. Some, like Menachem Begin's Irgun Zwai Leumi and the Stern gang, were outright terrorists; their tactics appalled even Ben Gurion. (9) In June 1945 the Irgun blew up the King David Hotel, causing ninety-one deaths. British soldiers were shot by snipers; cars loaded with dynamite were driven into British army camps. Do these people have a right to complain about terrorism? Even the Palmach, the combat organization of the Haganah, blew up bridges and derailed trains. The crimes that had been committed in a few—fortunately very few—places had frightened the Arabs; when war came to their area, they followed the advice to stay clear of it. In so doing, they indicated that they were not taking part in the war operations. Clearly, in all wars of the past, displaced populations did expect to go back to their places of home, of work, of personal contacts. To keep them from returning, to forbid them a choice between staying abroad and accepting conquest, violates custom and international law—in fact it is a crime. Yet, for reasons of national policy, the Israeli government seized this opportunity to create a demographically homogeneous Jewish state. (10)

It was at this moment, and through this deed, that the issue of "the Palestinians" was created. So far, we have encountered Palestinians as the inhabitants of an area that might include all of the present state of Jordan, or only the population of the Mandate territory. Now the name has come to define almost exclusively the million Arabs who claimed that they had been expelled from their homeland and who were forced to live in primitive camps spread outside Israel in the Gaza strip, on the West Bank, in Lebanon, and in Syria. These camps were maintained by UNRRA, a United Nations affiliate, and financed mostly by American contributions.

Aside from the moral and humanitarian outrage they constitute, maintaining these camps was a political mistake of the first order. They became hotbeds of unrest, recruiting grounds for terrorist organizations, breeding places for corruption, blackmail, and crime. A few cents a day

per head, amounting to many millions of dollars per year, meant an invitation to count many heads twice. The fraudulent claim that there are 2 million people in those camps is clearly exposed by the census figures of 1946. Even if every single Arab in all of Palestine had fled, there could still not be more than 1.2 million. Of course in the thirty years that have elapsed, the original 600,000 have been blessed with children and grandchildren; even some "dead souls" may have been procreative.

No one denies that many Arabs on the West Bank considered the miserable allowance in the camps preferable to their normal subsistence under Arab governments. On the other hand, genuine refugees from Palestine left the camps and found lucrative employment in other Arab states; many others died. All remain statistics in the camp population, and so are their children, although the children may live in other countries. By the most conservative statistics, therefore, more than half of the present camp inmates never lived in Israel. The Israelis who justify their claim to the land by the tribal memory of two thousand years obviously have no argument against people whose claim is based on tribal memories reaching back only thirty years. More than the expellees' actual misery, the bitterness of the sacrifice that was imposed on them intensifies the hatred that defines the Palestinians as a nation distinct from other Arabs.

Should the displaced Palestinians have been admitted by other Arab states? The Germans expelled from Eastern Europe after the Second World War were among the Federal Republic's greatest assets. England admitted West Indians and mestizos whose country had become someone's state. Why do not Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, or rich Kuwait, Algeria, Saudi Arabia help their Palestinian brothers—for whom they shed such abundant tears—get integrated into their countries? Although the oil sheiks have the means, they feel no obligation to do so. (11) Actually, they would rather use these unfortunate victims of national wars as pawn in their own game of power politics. They are not interested in healing this wound; they want it to fester, but in the body of Israel, and in the body of world peace.

How could this have been prevented? At some point between 1948 and 1968, the United States should have stopped subsidizing the refugee camps and Israel should have made an offer that might have, in one bold stroke, drastically reduced the number of "Palestinians" and disarmed their militancy. The offer should have been based on recognition of legitimate claims by those who could prove that they had lost their property, home, or job in the present territory of Israel. They should have been given the option of either a settlement in money or return under Israeli law. Since the conditions of life as a second-class citizen are never enviable, even when the nationalities are not emotionally hostile to each other, I believe that few Palestinians would have opted for return. Most would rather have taken the money, especially if at the same time U.S. subsidies had been ended. (12)

The Jewish authorities and public opinion have rejected such proposals on the twofold ground that Israel could not accommodate so many Arabs without disrupting her economy and without endangering the safety of her state. (13) The first part of this rejoinder sounds odd in view of their steady clamor for more immigrants from countries holding more Jews than there are Arab

statistics in the camps. The second part is refuted by the results of the Six-Day War, which has added another million Arabs to the population of Israel and many Israelis now speak of a "Greater Israel."

Most Israelis would probably want to keep the occupied areas if they could move the Arabs out, while Arab nationalism, strangely, demands the return of uninhabited desert first and liberation of the bemoaned brothers later.

In fact, Palestinians are not just the refugees in the camps of 1948. There are a million Arabs who live under military authorities in conquered territory. Despite the greater prosperity that annexation has brought to them, they are a source of unrest and an acute danger to peace. There can be no settlement, no truce, and no confidence between Arabs and Jews as long as their status is not determined equitably and as long as there is no international machinery to ascertain the will of the Palestinians themselves. Unless a political dialogue is initiated between Israel and responsible Arab leaders—a dialogue about concrete proposals, that will satisfy legitimate claims—Yasir Arafat will step into the vacuum and pretend that he knows what the Palestinians want, and he will go on blackmailing his Arab friends and the international community. He also has rivals: should he not occupy the vacuum, some terrorist group or perhaps even the Communist Party will. The ball, therefore, is in Israel's court. (14)

At the time of the Six-Day War, the Israeli government declared that it would hold the occupied territories only as pawns and evacuate them in return for a peace treaty. It has offered to pay compensation to those who have lost property in old Palestine—or rather, to allow the United States to make such payments; but it has not given refugees a choice of taking payment or returning. Meanwhile, the cancer of the Palestinians not only continues to fester but is being transplanted to the world arena, where it eats away the possibilities of peaceful coexistence. A decision is urgently needed to attack the primary point of the evil. Neither recriminations about the past nor legal constructions of right and wrong are required. What is required is finding political answers to political problems.

The offer to receive or to compensate legitimate claimants might be made with greater confidence by the Israeli government if at the same time the Palestinians were to be offered a state of their own. It has been suggested that the West Bank and the Gaza strip—two noncontiguous territories—would constitute such a state. Unfortunately, that state would not be economically viable; hence it would be a pawn in the political game of the oil sheiks. Nor would such a proposal be politically acceptable without including the Arab part of Jerusalem. The Israelis are loath to give up any part of Jerusalem, and there is at this time no device of condominium or international control that would make the administration of the city possible without friction. It is clear that the real point of the quarrel is not viability but sovereignty. All the principals are too primitive in their tribal instincts or too immature as nations to be reasonable on questions where self-respect is at stake. Therefore, the solution for Jerusalem will have to be imposed by the great powers; it cannot be negotiated between the parties concerned. As long as they pretend to negotiate about it, they merely indicate that they do not mean to make peace.

By contrast, the return of the occupied territories must be negotiated by Israel itself with its neighbors, and the return of the refugees can be negotiated only privately between the Israeli government and those private parties who claim to have been residents of the area now under the government's jurisdiction. By its very nature, this cannot be a problem between Israel and Egypt or Syria, for neither of these countries claims sovereignty in Palestine. It could be negotiated between Israel and a state that can speak in the name of the Palestinians. These are a distinct people, different in background and culture from the Bedouins of Jordan, from the mercantile Lebanese, from the temperamental Syrians, from the millennia old Egyptians. They must determine their own fate, both in Israel and in the West Bank area. They would probably prefer to sever their political ties with Jordan and might be interested in economic arrangements, to mutual advantage, with Israel. It stands to reason that they would rather not fight Boumédienne's wars and that the skimpy subsidies some of their guerrillas are getting from oil sheiks cannot substitute for a developmental plan and a technology to go with it. In the long run, a Palestinian state on the West Bank might easily fall into Israel's orbit, or become a client of Moscow, Beijing, Washington, Teheran—who knows?

It is not necessary to believe that appeasement will bring an early cessation of terrorist attacks or a lowering of the level of invective in Arab rhetoric. But it may lay the foundation of a more constructive relationship between the Arabs and Jews on the local level and perhaps bring to old Palestine some kind of unity on the basis of economic interests and businesslike relations. In other words: it is necessary to strip this political problem of ideology. Although in this age everybody is "raising consciousness" or seeking to establish an identity, there is altogether too much of that in the Middle East. The Palestinians speak Arabic and worship in mosques; but they have come from many countries and have intermarried with many conquering nations. Their identity is of rather recent origin, through the misfortunes of war and yet another foreign conquest. Their appeasement ought to be less difficult than their arousal. They are looking for opportunities. I am even tempted to say that they can be bought; but they are being terrorized, and this may be the greatest obstacle to peace at this moment.

Can Israel wager her security on the vague prospect that one day the Palestinians might not only awaken but also mature? There are no alternatives, and one must look for solutions that have some promise of lasting. One may hope to prevent an explosion though one may not be able to remove the dynamite. Above all one must divide, not unite, one's enemies. Third World strategists have made the Palestinian issue into a cutting edge of their attack on Western positions in world politics. To blunt that edge, it is not necessary for the United States to take drastic measures, though it needs to radically rethink the issue. The friends of Israel—and, surprisingly, that includes many who have valiantly criticized "Cold war attitudes" in U. S. policies—are tied to the confrontational patterns of the past decades; they think in terms of security rather than in political terms. They have missed valuable opportunities for peace in the past ten years. They gamble on the survival chances of a particular structure of the Israeli state, which is a dangerous gamble at best and is becoming more dangerous every day. The thought of having Arab citizens in their midst horrifies the Israelis; but while staring at that danger, they don't see the gathering of Arab armies outside the gate. They have too much confidence that the gate can be held shut for all time; this is an illusion for which others have

paid dearly. In the long run, security lies only in the confidence of one's neighbors.

Aware that I have made some controversial statements, I want to make clear that the issue is neither moral nor judicial, but political. Those who wish to debate my proposal should refrain from reminding me who "started it" or who is "more to blame" or whose "rights" are better. Wherever I have touched upon such questions, my intention has merely been to show how Palestinians see them, and that is a political fact, not a moral judgment.

Notes

1. Arabs today identify themselves only by speech. Originally the term means conquerors coming from the Peninsula.
2. In 1922, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill rejected the interpretation that Arab laws and customs had to be subordinated to Jewish interests, and Arab representatives rejected every constitution the British or the League of Nations tried to impose on the country. The Arab Congress in 1928 demanded a "fully democratic" government—whatever that meant in terms of Arab constitutions.
3. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin was no "anti-Semite"; he simply dropped a hot potato that cost England 50 million pounds a year. He was not the only Englishman, however, to wonder why the Jews were turning against England—of all nations—which had fought Hitler. Gratitude is not a political word, but bitterness is.
4. The United Nations then had fifty-seven members; obviously the resolution would not pass today. Except for states recognized in the Westphalian Peace Treaty (1648) and at the Vienna Congress (1815), no other state has received such sanction. States are usually a product of violence.
5. This was the term used abroad; the Hebrew term sounds less offensive.
6. A reader points out that the number affected was comparatively small and that terrorism developed mostly in the cities. Unfortunately, the symbolic and political value of the object does not depend on its size or price.
7. "The revolt is largely manned by the peasantry, that is to say by the people whose life and livelihood are on the soil but who have no say whatever in its disposal; and their anger and violence are as much directed against the Arab landowners and brokers who have facilitated the sales as against the policy of the mandatory Power under whose aegis the transactions have taken place. The fact that some of those landowners have served on national Arab bodies makes them only more odious to the insurgent peasantry and has rendered it less amenable to the influence of the political leaders as a whole." George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (New York: Lippincott, 1939), pp. 406-7. The Jewish leaders—except for the Communists, Martin Buber, and some *chalutzim*—never thought of allying themselves with these victims of colonization. See Bernard Avishai in *Dissent,* Spring 1975.
8. Some say the number was 800,000—more than had been living in the Jewish half of Palestine.
9. Obviously, what applies to Arabs must apply to Jews. Most Jews may not have

approved of terrorism—though my father, usually one of the most law-abiding citizens, did; but Arabs are even less able than Jews to distinguish between factions in the other camp. The crime must be condemned; an entire people must not be condemned for it. But I am not arguing here about the morality of terror; my aim is to establish the fact that the Arab population *felt* threatened.

10. Unfortunately, socialists like *Dissent* contributors Avishai and N. Gordon Levin have defended this theft on the ground that "socialist values" can be realized better in a securely Jewish environment. Would they agree with the Soviet government that "Soviet values" can be realized better in an environment that does not include Solzhenitsyn, Pasternak, or Trotsky?
11. Israel claims that she accepted a million Oriental Jews, mostly expelled from the Arab countries. The rationale of the Jewish "homeland," however, conflicts with the suggestion that these should be balanced against the Arab expellees. They would be entitled to Israeli citizenship even without being harassed in Baghdad. Besides, a forcible population exchange is repugnant from any internationalist perspective.
12. Gordon Levin rejects the notion that readmission could "serve [any] real human interests besides a satisfaction of Arab honor." But that is a question of deep concern, and it is in Israel's power to restore that sense of honor.
13. It seems that Zionism has abandoned its earliest propaganda, which claimed that a Jewish state would make its Arab citizens happy and contented.
14. Arab notables in the occupied areas are subject to intimidation; some Israelis therefore think that Arafat is the only *available* partner. It is certain that no parley is now conceivable without him, a calamity that conforms to the pattern of the Israeli's poor grasp of diplomatic realities: they have always been forced to choose between two evils after they had rejected an alternative that would have been, after all, second best.

Henry Pachter *(1907-1980) was one of the 20th century's most important scholar's of socialism and political history. This article was originally published in Dissent in the fall of 1975 and was reprinted in the collection* Socialism In History: The Political Essays of Henry Pachter *(Columbia University Press). Its persistent relevance, especially under current circumstances, led to our choice to republish it here in Logos.*

The Evolution of Legal Authority in Iran

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

In November 2002 an Iranian professor of history, Hashim Aghajari, a veteran of the Iran-Iraq war, was sentenced to death by the Islamic revolutionary court in Hamadan among other counts for questioning the practice of blind "emulating/following" (*taqlid*) of the *mujtahids* in matters of belief and practice. His sentencing led to several days of widespread university protests fueled by Aghajari's refusal to appeal his death sentence. What incensed the Iranian court which accused him of blasphemy was that, by implication, Aghajari was denying the "authority/guardianship of the jurist" (Persian, *wilayat-i faqih;* Arabic, *al-wilaya al-faqih*), the very founding principal of the Islamic Republic. Aghajari's objection aimed not merely at the practice of *taqlid,* but the legitimacy (or their lack of) of the "guardian jurist" (*wali-yi faqih),* the "supreme leader" of the Islamic Republic. This new anti-clerical quest for Islamic modernity naturally steered much interest among younger generations of Iranians.

Aghajaris' speech commemorated 'Ali Shari'ati, the renowned revolutionary reformist. Invoking Shari'ati's notion of "Islamic Protestantism" as the only way to liberate the society from the impasse of the "traditional Islam," Aghajari was striving to arrive at a new historical understanding of the Shi'ite heritage. Though still grounded in the Qur'an and *hadith*, this new reading was engaged more deeply with modernity, human rights and plurality. Aghajari called for social justice and democracy in economy and in politics though he implicitly distanced himself from Shari'ati's firebrand revolutionary rhetoric. He does not remain untouched by Shari'ati's exhortations to be the prophet of Protestant Islam, a claim made by a number of Islamic reformers including the celebrated Jamal al-Din "Afghani," the Iranian pan-Islamic activist of the 19th century. Yet he goes so far as criticizing the Shi'ite establishment for its culture of condescension especially in the exercise of *ijtihad*:

> The people are not monkeys who merely imitate. The pupil understands and then acts, and then tries to expand his own understanding, so someday he will not need the teacher. He can himself directly look up (the sources) and deduct and form an opinion. The relationship that the traditional institution (i.e. the clerical establishment) seeks is one of master and the follower; the master remains master and the follower remains follower. Forever these shackles straps around his neck. The relationship of the (real) scholar (*`alim*) with people is a critical one. Since he has expert knowledge, we listen to him as a scholar. Whenever we find something

> objectionable, we criticize, we debate. He is not a saintly celestial being to be treated by us as a divine figure. Of course this class (i.e. the clergy) first turned the infallible (Shi`ite) Imams to divine figures so that they themselves could pose as divine representatives of the Imams.[i]

Such critique of the abiding authority of *ijtihad* and that of the so-called "source of emulation" (*marja'-i taqlid*) inevitably bring to light the much debated issue of legal authority in Shi'ite Islam and, more specifically, the problem of institutionalization of *ijtihad.* He obviously does not address openly the *wilayat-i faqih,* but his reference to the "imam" in the above passage, as in other allusions sprinkled throughout his speech, signifies the obvious to his sensitive audience. He deliberately seems to have touched on a sore point since the doctrine of the "guardianship of the jurists," it can be argued, stands on shaky legal grounds. Shi'ism never historically or institutionally made the necessary leap from the loosely defined *ijtihad* to a centralized *marja'iya*, let alone ever develop the theoretical ground for creating a universal judicial authority.

Before the time of Ayatollah Khomeini, Shi'i legal thought never did seriously engage in the sphere of public law and consequently never articulated a coherent theory of government. Even in the safety of the *madrasa,* Shi'ite law remained entirely preoccupied with the articulation of civil and private law as practiced in the *mujtahid*-run civil courts. Such practice of *ijtihad* was never systematized or subjected to clear and universally accepted norms, one may venture to say, almost by choice. The Shi'ite law on which the *mujtahids* relied remained a matter of interpretation and scholastic scrutiny largely within the *madrasa* environment rather than through the practice of the law. Throughout the Safavid and the early Qajar periods (16th to 19th centuries) Shi'ite law acquired a remarkable level of sophistication, especially in the theoretical field of the "roots of jurisprudence" (*usul al-fiqh*). Yet both in the study of the rudiments (*furu'*) and in the methodology of *usul al-fiqh* Shi'ite scholarship resisted systematic codification beyond what was established by earlier scholars largely between the 10th and 14th centuries.

Even the "emergence" of the status of the "supreme exemplar" (*marja'-i taqlid*, lit. the source of emulation) in the 19th century remained largely an informal practice. No set of objective standards for designating such a leadership ever developed and no specific legal privileges were arrogated to this office. As late as the middle of the 20th century, the *marja'iyat* was largely aimed at addressing the needs for a communal leadership rather than a supreme legal authority. No *marj'a* before Ayatullah Burujerdi ever claimed his legal opinions to be universally binding. Nor any of the *marja*'s claimed to be standing at the apex of a judicial hierarchy or was accepted as such by the *mujtahids* or by the community at large. Whenever they effectively exercised their legal power, as in the tobacco rebellion of 1890-91 or during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911 or the banning of the drinking of Pepsi Cola in the 1950s, the *marja*'s relied on their popularity and prestige rather than any legal precept. The three preconditions for a *marja',* being the most learned (*a'lam*), the most judicious (*a'dal*), and the most pious (*atqa*), were qualities barely measurable by legal or academic standards. No institutional procedure was ever set to determine such preconditions. What in reality

determined success of a *marja'*, or for that matter any *mujtahid*, was his popularity and the size of his follower constituency (or congregation). The question thus remains as to what process, historical and legal, transformed this informal and democratically chaotic form of defuse judicial leadership into a binding, all-embracing, and authoritative office of the *wilayat-i faqih* with claim over the judicial and political authority.

Ijtihad and the Usuli interpretation of judicial authority

As early as the 10th century the so-called 12th Shi'ite (*Ithna 'Ashari*) jurists recognized the Occultation (*ghayba*) of the 12th Imam, the state of his invisible (but directly inaccessible) existence in the physical world, as the chief postulate for denouncing any form of temporal power in the absence of the Imam as inherently unjust and therefore illegitimate. Only the return of the Imam in an undetermined moment in future, it was believed, could establish on earth the ultimate values of justice and legitimate rule. This absolutist messianic belief in the Imam's eventual establishing of a utopian perfect order has often been viewed as the chief obstacle on the way of articulating a legal public space in Shi'ism. The same rationale also barred in theory any legitimate collaboration between the jurists and the state. Every government was in theory seen as inherently oppressive. The same principle of avoiding political collaboration was conducive to the flourishing of the Shi'ite study of *hadith*, as means of emulating the models of the Prophet and the Imams, and early development of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) focusing on civil and contractual law as well as on devotional acts and obligations.

In practice, however, the quietist tendency among the Shi'ite jurists, as opposed to powerful messianic trends throughout the Shi'ite past, encouraged compliance and even collaboration with the "unjust" and "tyrannical" (*ja'ir*) state especially if and when the state was accommodating the Shi'is. This *de facto* acceptance of the temporal power, needless to say, was in full agreement with the ancient Persian notion of the "sisterhood" of the religious and the state institutions, a interdependency perceived to be essential for the endurance of both institutions and the stability of the social order against the corrupting influence of "bad religion" (i.e., the antinomian, often messianic, alternatives to legalistic Shi'ism). While the state maintained peace and order, upheld the *shari'a,* defended the domain, and guarded the jurists' vested interests, the jurists were in turn expected to maintain good relations with the state, and even serve in the state-controlled judiciary.

Already by the 14th century the Shi'ite jurists developed an elaborate legal system of private law based on *ijtihad,* the exercise of logical reasoning by utilizing the sources of the law to form qualified legal opinion within a specific timeframe. The exercise of *ijtihad* in turn led to the development of an elaborate methodology of jurisprudence, the science of the *usul al-fiqh*. Some of the best legal minds articulated complex linguistic debates on legal semantics and phenomenological discussions on the authority of the text. Yet oddly enough, *usul al-fiqh* avoided systematic debate on *ijtihad,* such as the *mujtahids*' qualifications and institutional hierarchy, and failed to discuss such seemingly mundane issues as the *madrasa* curriculum. Nor did it address the inconsistencies and ambiguities of the Islamic law or question the

rationale behind its archaic categorization.

Even the establishment of the Safavid state (1501-1736) and declaration of Shi'ism as its official creed (in obvious contrast to the rival Ottoman empire's expressed upholding of "orthodox" Sunni Islam) did not substantially alter the *mujtahid*s resistance to institution development. This in spite of the Safavid dynasty's presumed sacred lineage, its active sponsorship of the clerical establishment and heavy patronage of the teaching circles. The immigrant jurists from the Arab Shi'ites communities of Jabal 'Amil (in today's Syria and Lebanon), Qatif and Bahrain in northern Arabia and the Persian Gulf, and Najaf and Hilla in southern Iraq were incorporated into the judiciary of the Safavid Empire. These *mujtahids* and their Iranian counterparts, many being converts from Sunnism, considered the Safavid shahs as legitimate defenders of the faith and their empire as the guarded Shi'ite domain. For the "learned" (*'ulama*) community it was therefore permissible to assume judicial offices, as majority did, collect alms and the so called the "share of the Imam," and even to set the congregational Friday prayer which considered by majority of Shi'ite jurists as impermissible in the absence of the Imam of the Age.

The jurists' reluctance in this period to solidify their gains by implementing a judicial leadership independent from the state is not surprising. Their reluctance to better define the boundaries of *ijtihad* was in part because the Safavid rulers' successfully recruited the *mujtahids* as state functionaries. Although the office of *shaykh al-Islam* was held by a high-ranking jurist, this was not understood to be a legal supervision over the entire judicial community. Nor did it mean administrative or financial control, a task that the Safavid state consistently conferred on a non-clerical bureaucrat with the title of *sadr* (i.e., the chielf officer). Moreover, the Safavids in the late 17th century did not hesitate to patronize the alternative Akhbari school which in contradistinction to the Usuli school rejected *ijtihad* and its logical rationalization. The debate between the two schools in the late 17th and throughout the 18th centuries weakened the development of *usul al-fiqh* as a discretionary methodology and favored instead a wholesale and uncritical validation of all the *hadith* as sources of the law. More specifically, all reports (*akhbar*) from diverse Shi'ite *hadith* sources attributed to the Prophet *and* the Imams, were considered as authentic, with little discretion for their historical validity. The Akhbari resistance to independent reasoning was congruent with the Safavid state's aversion to allow the emergence of an independent *mujtahid*-dominated judiciary.

After the collapse of the Safavid Empire in 1736 and the ensuing political instability, Usulism reemerged as the predominant legal school in the late 18th and early 19th century. In the early decades of the 19th century the Usuli jurists made evident gains in socio-economic and educational areas hence laying the foundation for a clerical establishment that continued with little interruption up to the present. They monopolized the *madrasa*s' education and the pulpit of the mosques, controlled charitable endowments (*awqaf*), and posed as the only legitimate recipient of religious taxes. They developed amicable though somewhat distant relations with the early rulers of the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925), a mutually beneficial relation that brought about the golden age of Usuli *ijtihad*. The growth of religious circles first in Najaf, where Akhbarism was soundly defeated, and later in the Iranian cities such as Isfahan and Qum was

supported with a large student body and with a closely-nit network of mater-pupil patronage. Impressive number of legal works were produced both on the specifics of the law (*furu'*) and on the *usul al-fiqh* with implicit emphasis on the role of the *mujtahids* not only as legal scholars but judges and social mediators. The growth of congregations in mosques also strengthened jurists' ties with social groups in search of legal support, most noticeably the merchants of the bazaar who backed the *mujtahids* and financed their teaching circles in exchange for legal security and representation.

Yet with all the success in developing a semi-independent legal network and a solid lay constituency, the jurists of the Qajar period did not seek to reconstruct the theory of *ijtihad* and its application to public law. Despite occasional "turf wars" with the state over privilege and sphere of influence, or later in defiance of the state's Westernizing policies, they continued to honor the dichotomy of the religious law (*shar'*), as it concerned the jurists, versus the customary law (*'urf*), as exercised by the state. Neither side, the jurists or the state (at least before the rise of the European-inspired reforms) attempted to define each of these two spheres of *shar'* and *'urf* or demarcate their boundaries by means of codification, let alone to breach the informal boundaries between them. The *usul al-fiqh* remained essentially concerned with its arcane debates on the legal method and legal sources. Voluminous works, commentaries and glosses on commentaries were produced by the Usuli scholars on intricate details of semantics and epistemology. Yet the *mujtahids* simply did not see the need for a centralized corporate identity or for disturbing the delicate balance with the state upon which they continuously negotiated their power. The state in turn preferred ambiguity whereby through consent and coercion it hoped to persuade the jurists to comply with the state's otherwise waning power and prestige. By the end of the century the jurists were more than ever isolated in their world of *madrasa* and private courts. Accordingly, the curriculum of the seminaries was substantially truncated to focus solely on legal studies at the expense of non-religious and especially non-legal topics. Even such traditional fields as mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy were no longer part of the jurists' general education.

Voices of protest to the jurists' monopolies and their intellectual petrifaction further moved the *mujtahids* toward conservatism and added to their distaste for new approaches. Most significantly, the messianic Babi movement in the middle decades of the century questioned the very legitimacy of the clerical community, its theoretical premises, educational methods, and legal practices. The Babi religion (later to be transformed into the Baha'i faith) denied the long-held jurist position that they collectively represent the Imam of the Age in Occultation. The Babi apocalyptic movement with growing popularity not only sought leadership in the new "Imam of the Age," but declared the end of the historical cycle of Islamic *shari'a* by ushering a new cycle of prophetic manifestation. In response to the Babi challenge, the jurists community closed ranks and came closer to full collaboration with the state in crushing the Babi revolution. In no other area the jurists heeded the Babi call for fundamental reform though in longer run the clerical community did produce a new form of communal leadership. The status of the *marja'* that was first recognized for Shaykh Murtaza Ansari in the late 1850s, not surprisingly coincided with the growth of the Babi clandestine anti-clerical subversion. His emergence as the "supreme exemplar" no doubt mirrored the public desire for a clerical

leadership committed to higher standards of morality, learning, and social justice. Ansari came to represent these values for a growing constituency of seminarians in the *madrasas* and among the lay followers.

The idea of *marja'iya* as a communal leadership with an increasing claim over political process continued in the second half of the century and through the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911). Perhaps the height of such politicized *marja'iya* came with Mirza Hasan Shirazi, the influential jurist and teacher whose access to funds and his ever-growing teaching circle placed him ahead of his competitors as the most widely recognized *marja'*. His general ban on the use of tobacco during the Regie protest of 1890-91 for the first time demonstrated the *marja'*s power against the state and European imperial monopolies. The channeling of public discontent into political discourse is even more evident during the Constitutional Revolution. Several mujtahids, simultaneously recognized as *marja`s*, appealed to diverse constituencies with contesting political agendas. The breakdown of a united leadership during this period of political reform and Western-style secular democracy demonstrated the crucial role of the jurists' followers in promoting the cause of *mujtahids* on both sides of the constitutional debate. The greater polarization of the clergy especially over the issues of secular judiciary and civil liberties vouched for this multiplicity of leadership. A number of influential jurists who sided against a Western-style constitution and in favor of a Shari`a-based alternative were defeated and lost constituency and prestige, even their lives.

From *marja'iya* to *wilayat-i faqih*

Only in the latter part of the 20th century do we witness the gradual shift back toward a centralized *marja'iyya* under Ayatollah Husayn Burujirdi. He should be viewed as the first to hold a united leadership not only in the management of the Qum seminaries, collection of the religious taxes and distribution, but a certain degree of legal authority over the clerical community. It goes without saying that the "emergence" of this form of centralized *marja'iya* was a belated, albeit inevitable, response to the state's intrusion into the judicial domain. The rise of the Pahlavi secular autocracy from the middle of the 1920s precipitated the growth of modern educational institutions. It abolished the *mujtahids'* civil courts and replaced them with a state-controlled judiciary. The state regulating the use of charitable endowments, and similar measures undermined the *'ulama*'s social status and affected their economic influence. The growth of the secularized or semi-secularized middle classes and popularity of a variety of religious and ideological challenges, from the Baha'i faith to Marxism and Western-style modernity, persuaded the demoralized and shrunken clerical community to try to reorganize the *madrasa* and to solidify its network at the national level. Most importantly, the jurists gradually moved away from the state-*'ulama* alliance that was founded on the ancient principle of preserving social equilibrium through guarded collaboration. In due course the new *marja'iya* reconstituted its base not only in the bazaar community, where it was traditionally strong, but among a new class of urban and urbanized poor. They offered a pool for clerical recruitment and an enthusiastic mosque congregation.

Such greater solidarity and group identity however did not result in reconsideration of the

Shi'ite legal thought or any serious attempt to institutionalize the informal *marja'iya* leadership. Study of *fiqh* in the seminaries of Najaf, Qum and elsewhere remained almost entirely loyal to the arcane precepts and practices of the Shi'ite law and its obsessive preoccupation with devotional acts (*'ibadat*) and contracts (*'uqud*). The striking persistence of legal archaism among the Shi'ite jurists can be explained in part by inherent conservatism of the legal curriculum and in part by isolation from the society's new secular discourse. Left out of the new state-run judiciary, the Shi'ite teaching circles in Najaf and Qum made almost no attempt to address new issues of public law or even offer a modern reading of the old legal texts. The so-called *hawza*s continued to operate along the informal teacher-pupil patronage and produce growing number of jurists and/or preachers in need of new congregations.

A number of *marja*'s that "emerged" after the death of Burujirdi in 1960, including Ayatollah Khomeini, were no doubt more organized in their teaching and charitable operations. Yet there was no attempt in the clerical circles to revisit the nature and conditions of *marja'iya,* let alone arrive at a consensus about criteria for such leadership or the hierarchy. As much as the lay constituency of the *marja'a*s grew and the funding sources improved, no equivalent of an ecclesiastical hierarchy emerged even though there existed a fairly coherent network of the *'ulama* throughout Iran, southern Iraq and Lebanon.

The defuse *marja'iya* leadership of this period relied heavily on both the lay and the clerical "followers." To mark their place in a complex game of prestige and popularity the *marja*'s depended on their followers for higher standing. Naturally, at times they were bound by their whims and wishes. As Mutraza Mutahhari, a prominent follower of Khomeini and a leader of the future Islamic revolution pointed out in the early 1960's, in this popularity contest no *marja`* could survive without his constituency's financial and moral backing. In a conference organized by some religious modernists on the theme of *marja'iyat,* the largely modernists, among them Mahdi Bazargan, joined together with a new generation of activist clerics, such as Mutahhri, to urge the *marja's* to bring some order into the notoriously chaotic world of Shi'i clerical leadership.

The greater politicization of the clerical community, and especially the clerical clique around Ayatollah Khomeini from mid-1960s, responded positively to this call. Among the *marja's* of Qum and Najaf, Khomeini represented the most radical political position. His open anti-Pahlavi platform caused as much trouble for him as it gained him popularity especially among the lower and middle rank *'ulama* who were disillusioned with other *marja*'s and their collaboration with the shah's regime. Modernity thus came to the clerical establishment with political radicalization rather than a fundamental revision of the Shi'ite legal system and reconsideration of its curriculum and judicial premises. Even prominent students of Khomeini such as Husain 'Ali Muntazari and Mutaza Mutahhari seldom called for reconsideration of the Islamic legal tradition or new teaching methods or adopting a modern legal philosophy. For them legal reform equaled succumbing to an alien secular modernity introduced by a colonizing and corrupting West.

Majority of the new seminarians and clerical followers of Khomeini, came from among the

underprivileged in small towns and villages. Increasingly, they were drawn in to political dissent and political activism in the late 1960s and ’70s because they resented the wealth and privilege of the secularized urban middle classes. Equally, they resented and the state’s judiciary for supplanting the old and decentralized jurists’ courts. They also questioned subservience of the Pahlavi state. Khomeini and his prominent students capitalized on these discontents to promote his leadership as superior to other leaders not necessarily because of Khomeini’s juristic qualifications, which were meager, but because of his uncompromising political stance.

In the tense environment of confrontation with the shah and his police apparatus, this message of political dissent was better transmitted to the lay people by recalling the Shi’ite narratives of defiance and self-sacrifice, as in the commemoration of the martyrdom of ’Ali and that of his son, Husayn ibn ’Ali. Laboring over the obscure and mostly redundant details of Shi’ite law and the theoretical intricacies of *usul al-fiqh* appeared secondary if not entirely obsolete. Even Mutahhari, the most promising intellectual product of Qum in the 1970s preferred to delve into Western philosophy or Islamic reformism and revolutionary rhetoric rather than adopting a novel approach in *fiqh* and *usul.*

In a climate of state-driven secular modernity versus the ’*ulama*’s legal redundancy, Khomeini’s gradual tilt in the 1970s toward the doctrine of juridical sovereignty was the solution to the prolonged problem of unregulated leadership. He borrowed from the Sunni reformist milieu the notion of the Islamic government, long debated by the likes of Rashid Rida and later Abul ’Ala Maududi in order to set the legal ground for what he defined as the “authority of the jurist” (*wilayat-i faqih*). More a teacher of Greco-Islamic philosophy than a dabbler in jurisprudence, Khomeini was the right candidate to break through the inhibiting cobweb of juristic tedium. His theory had an unmistakable mystico-philosophical core that was colored by Shi’ite legal trappings. On a personal level it was the work of a reluctant jurist who was anxious to overcome his *marja’* rivals through the philosophical backdoor of charismatic leadership.

The concept of *wilaya* upon which Khomeini propounded his theory is a complex and theologically charged one. Variably read as *wilaya* (authority, guardianship) and *walaya* (patron-client bond of friendship), for Shi’ites it was the hereditary status primarily arrogated to ’Ali and his Imam descendants as true successors to the Prophet; a status of sovereignty over his true believers. In Sufism *wilaya* implied friendship with God, a saintly status of proximity to Truth, even according to some on par with prophecy. For the Shi’ite jurists *wilaya* was a purely legal term denoting the state of guardianship often assumed by the jurist over the legal minor (*saghir*) and mentally retarded (*mahjur*), hence *wilaya al-faqih*. Although in theory the guardianship of the jurist could be extended to the public sphere, in reality no jurist of any substance did consider as viable the jurist’s “authority to rule” (*wilaya al-hukm*). In the absence of the Occulted Imam, who is the just and legitimate enforcer of the *wilaya*, few jurists even condoned the “authority to judge” (*wilaya al-qada*) beyond mere issuance of *fatwa*s, but without the necessary power to enforce them. The notion of “general deputyship” (*niyaba ’amma*) on behalf of the Imam, as claimed by some jurists in the Safavid and early Qajar

periods, was never extended to the authority to govern, though it did reserve for the jurist a certain prerogatives, such as declaring *jihad* under the auspices of the state.

In the latter part of the 20th century however the prevalence of the idea of *marja'iya* seldom allowed the doctrine of collective deputyship of the *mujtahid*s to be considered. The semantic shift in referring to the jurists also indicate a change in focus. Khomeini's use of *faqih* (jurist), rather than *mujtahid* or *marja'*, in his own articulation of "guardianship" underlined sheer proficiency in *fiqh* rather than any acquired clerical status based on vague qualifications. His *wilaya,* in theory at least, could be extended to any jurist and not the one that is publicly recognized as the most important *marja'* or even a *mujtahid*. Such definition no doubt served Khomeini well while languishing in the exile of Najaf away from his constituency.

As defined by Khomeini, the doctrine of the "guardianship of the jurist" was applicable to public law as well as civil law. In the absence of the Hidden Imam, he argued, the jurist presents the least oppressive form of authority because contrary to temporal rule it is founded on Islamic principles. The jurist is the most qualified in matters of law, which according to Khomeini is inherently superior to any secular body of law, and he is obliged by the same Islamic legal principals to uphold and enforce it. It is therefore incumbent upon the jurist, as an "individual duty" to strive for acquiring political authority in order to form the Islamic government. Khomeini's doctrine was a revolutionary interpretation of the authority of the jurist even though he tried hard in his *wilayat-i faqih* (later *Hukumat-i Islami*) to fortify his theory with precedent from classical legal texts and citations from such Usulis jurists as the 19th century Mulla Ahmad Naraqi. No Shi'ite jurist before him ever extended the very limited application of legal *wilaya* to include public affairs, let alone, assuming of political power.

Legal articulations aside, Khomeini's doctrine was driven by the requirements of his constituency. Not only a young generation of his students and followers defied the legitimacy of the Pahlavi shah, and whatever he stood for, but they aspired coherence and unanimity within clerical ranks. The *wilayat-i faqih* promised not only the ascendancy of the jurists to positions of political power but a virtual end to clerical resistance to institutionalization. The rise of the *wilayat-i faqih* as an institution harbinger the eclipse of the *marja'iya* and all the ambiguity that was inherent in qualities of the *mujtahid.*

Assuming political power by Khomeini and his '*ulama* backers, which came with the revolution of 1979, inevitably imposed a bureaucratic regime on the Shi'ite '*ulama* more rigid than the chaotic *madrasa* system of Najaf and Qum ever did. Even the honorary clerical titles, inflated over time, gained new hierarchical connotation. While *ayatollah* (a sign of God) applied to the higher clerical figures, the *hujjat al-Islam* (a proof of Islam) signified the rank below. The highest status however was Khomeini's own. As the "guardian jurist" (*wali-yi faqih*) he assumed the title of *imam*, first time ever used in the history of Shi'ism in a context other than the twelve Imams. Although the office of guardian jurist was considered the one and the same as the "deputy of the imam" (*na'ib-i imam*), more in vogue in the 19th century, in practice a consensus was reached on the universal and sole reference of the term *imam* to the founder of the Islamic Republic, hence "*Imam* Khomeini."

The constitutional authority and popular aura that Khomeini acquired as the guardian jurist, denoted not only a desire for rationalization of the clerical community but also a drive toward clerical absolutism. The legitimacy and the mandate of the guardian jurist does not derive from his constituency of followers, as in the case of the *marja',* but from a sublime source. Despite the seemingly democratic trappings of the constitution of the Islamic Republic, the guardian jurist is answerable to no source but God, even though he is appointed by a Council of the Experts (*Majlis-i Khubragan*), a select body of high-ranking *'ulama* (and presumably impeachable by the same body). The range of the guardian's institutional authority is vast and universally abiding even though the Islamic Consultative Council (*Majlis-i Shawra-yi Islami*; i.e., the parliament) tends to modify his ultimate power. Similarly, articles of the Constitution guaranteeing the inalienable rights and freedoms of the individual contradict with the authoritarian power of the guardian jurist. Khomeini's charismatic aura in early years of the revolution glossed over the obvious contradiction in the constitution between democratic freedoms and the totalitarian power of the guardian jurist. In post-Khomeini era, and twenty-three years after the revolution, the contrast is glaring. The "supreme leader" (*rahbar*) as Khomeini's successor, Ayatollah 'Ali Khamanei is recognized in today's Islamic Republic, insists on these constitutional prerogatives to control, and if necessary quell, the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches of the government and remain unaccountable to any elected body.

The authoritarian nature of *wilayat-i faqih* is indebted to the persistent culture of autocracy which the revolution denounced in theory but perpetuated in practice. But it also was reflective of the Shi'ite judicial community's failure to rethink the precepts of the Shi'ite law and their applicability to pluralist values. The doctrine of the "guardianship of the jurist" was informed above all by a Shi'ite legal mindset that essentially was alien to the modern notions of plurality and democratic leadership even though, ironically, Shi'ite *ijtihad* and *marja'iya* operated on some form of popular representation. It was also colored, no doubt, by Khomeini's own mystical propensity for classical Sufism and specifically Ibn 'Arabi's theory of *wilaya*. Moreover, what historically informed "guardianship," as apparent in the rhetoric of the Islamic revolution, was an imagined narrative of Islam's golden age. The modern Shi'ite narrative of 'Ali's pristine (though historically doomed) caliphate placed great moral emphasis on leadership qualities of compassion (*walaya*) and self-denial (*ithar*) essential for creating a "classless" society. Added to the admixture that concocted the "guardianship of the jurist" also was the modern revolutionary urgency for assertive leadership harking back to the French age of "terror" and the Russian "dictatorship of the proletariat." Such presuppositions were barely conducive to a progressive legal framework that separates legal authority from political power and religion from the state. What profoundly was missing in this politico-legal vision of absolute leadership was a desire for re-examining the long-held precepts of Islamic law in a new light of historical relativity.

As for the clerical community, in the two decades since the Islamic revolution it has allowed itself to be largely incorporated into the Islamic regime and actively sought to monopolize positions of power. A minority of the jurists remained critical of the theory and the implementation of leadership and faced the dire consequences of their criticisms. The rising

opposition to *wilayat-i faqih* on the other hand unified the pro-regime clerics behind the doctrine and solidified the clerical hierarchy to an unprecedented degree. The Shi'ite establishment more than ever appears to be an equivalent of a state-sponsored church with its ecclesiastical hierarchy, perhaps, as Said Arjomand observed, comparable to the Weberian "cesaro-papist" model of the state. The concentration of power in the hand of an oligarchy consisting of the guardian jurist and his top echelons of clerical allies, inevitably triggered much resentment. The laymen and laywomen of younger generation with revolutionary credentials now feel they have been left out by a clerical establishment that resorts to repression to preserve its privileges and monopolies.

The anti-clerical content of Aghajari's speech and his call for an Islamic Reformation originates in this pool of anti-clerical resentment. Younger Iranians are frustrated with the monopoly of power, heavy-handed treatment of dissident voices, and obscurantist legal outlook. They also are disillusioned with repeated setbacks of the seemingly pro-reform wing of the clerical establishment as represented by President Muhammad Khatami and his moderate clerical supporters. Such calls for reforming Islam are by no means rare in the history of antinomean Islam. Yet what distinguishes this post-revolutionary episode from earlier examples is that this movement of protest, especially since Khomeini's death in 1989, aimed at a consolidated clerical hierarchy with claim to infallible and comprehensive authority. The guardianship of jurist is a far more explicit a claim over religious hegemony in public sphere and on behalf of the Imams than the old *marja'iya* ever was. This is what makes the new criticism especially potent and enduring.

As for Aghajari's fate, he seems to have been the involuntary beneficiary of the inconsistencies that are typical of Shi`ite legal practice. The same ruling of the Hamadan court that sentenced him to death for blasphemy also sentenced him to a total of eight years of imprisonment for three other related counts and after that to ten years of ban from teaching in any university. The court does not clarify whether the death sentence should be carried before or after eighteen years of incarceration and banishment from classroom. The seemingly ludicrous verdict of the court points to the ambiguities of a legal culture built on negotiation and compromise, a culture that still seems to be thriving more that two decades of Islamic revolutionizing.

Notes

1 *Aqajari: Matn-i kamel-i sokhanrani-yi Hamadan, etc*. (Tehran, 1382/2003), p. 36.

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A Mills Revival?

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

Prologue

Perhaps you know Foucault's remark that despite the torrent of criticism directed against his philosophical system, "Hegel prowls through the twentieth century." Consigned to a kind of academic purgatory for the last three decades of the twentieth century, at a time when social theory had migrated from the social sciences obsessed with case studies and social "problems" to literature and philosophy where he was rarely discussed and almost never cited., C. Wright Mills was an absent presence. All sociologists, and most people in other social scientific disciplines knew his name, and in their political unconscious, recognized his salience, but were deterred by fear and careerism from following his path as a public political intellectual. Yet in the wake of scandals involving leading corporations and their Chief Executive and Financial Officers, which have become daily fare even in mainstream media, and the hegemony of corporate capital over the American state, which was widely reported in the press and television with unembarrassed approbation, Mills's work is experiencing a small but pronounced revival. Although his name rarely appears on the reading lists of fashionable graduate courses in social and cultural theory, the republication of four of his major books, with new introductions by the historian Nelson Lichtenstein (*New Men of Power*), the social critic Russell Jacoby (*White Collar*) political theorist Alan Wolfe (*The Power Elite*), and sociologist Todd Gitlin (*The Sociological Imagination*) is likely to aid in exposing his work to students and younger faculty.

For some, Mills does not qualify in this era when social and cultural theory is dominated by European influences. Except for his dissertation *Sociology and Pragmatism*, he rarely engaged in philosophical speculation; more to the point apart from some essays, in only one major

instance, *Character and Social Structure,* did he address the "meta" questions such as method or the underlying presuppositions of theorizing. Marxists criticize the lack, even disdain of "class analysis" in his work; indeed the commentaries in his collection of annotated readings, *The Marxists* constitute both an appreciation and an unsystematic critique of Marx and Marxism. And social historians, most of them informed by class and class struggle, object to his focus on the study of élites rather than popular expressions from below, even within social movements.

Yet Mills remains a model for those who wish to become intellectuals: by the evidence of his massive output in the twenty-three years of publications he was the antithesis of the specialist or the expert. When most in the human sciences followed the path of least resistance by writing the same articles and books over and over, Mills ranged widely over historical cultural, political, social, and psychological domains. He was interested in the labor and radical movements and wrote extensively on them; as a close student of Max Weber he made some of the most trenchant critiques of bureaucracy; he was among the leading post-war critics of the emergent mass culture and the mass communications media and, despite its ostensibly introductory tone, *The Sociological Imagination* may be America's best contribution to the ongoing debate about the relationship of scholarship to social commitment, a debate which has animated literary as well as social science circles for decades.

His literary executor and biographer, Irving Louis Horowitz, turned against him, for the most part, so the biography tells us more about the author than about Mills. Other book-length treatments are sympathetic but limited, and to a large extent, dated. With the partial exception of some excellent dissertations and master's theses, notably Tom Hayden's insightful *Radical Nomad* more than forty years after his death, Mills awaits a major critical study, let alone a full-length biography.

We may speculate that among putative readers his contemporanity, the sharp focus on the United States and its traditions and, most of all, his annoying habit of writing plainly (substituting vernacular expressions for scientific terms) turned away some who can only respect writers who invent neologisms and whose simple thoughts require complex syntax. But at a moment when these fashions have lost some of their luster, those who yearn for substance as well as style may return with pleasure to the dark ruminations of C. Wright Mills.

I

C. Wright Mills is exemplary of a vanishing breed in American life: the public political intellectual who, despite his grating message, often received a hearing in mainstream media. For almost fifteen years, beginning with the publication of *The New Men of Power* in 1948 and ending with his untimely death, at age forty six, in 1962, Mills was among America's best known social scientists and social critics. During the late 1940s and 1950s he published three books that constitute a theory and description of the post-World War II American social structure. His *Sociological Imagination* remains widely read in college classrooms, both for its attempt to provide a socially-committed introduction to the discipline, and its fierce critique of

the prevailing tendencies in American sociology, what Mills calls “Grand Theory” and “Abstracted Empiricism.” The grand theorist’s scope is much too wide to yield practical and theoretical insight. And Mills criticizes the legions of Abstracted Empiricists who, in the service of incrementally accumulated verifiable scientific knowledge, confine themselves to producing small-scale investigations. Together with his collaborator and mentor, Hans Gerth, he edited one of the earliest and best collections in English translation of Max Weber’s essays. And *Character and Social Structure* (1954), written with Gerth, an unjustly neglected work, may be considered Mills’s premier work of social theory. This book elaborates what I claim was the “scaffolding” upon which he hung his major works of middle range theory, especially the triology. In fact, it is difficult to fully comprehend the harsh critiques of *Sociological Imagination,* and Mills’s method, without the elaborated theoretical framework of *Character.*

While not exactly a household name, he was widely known among the politically active population and wide circles of academic and independent intellectuals. Unlike many public intellectuals he was neither a servant nor a supplicant of power but, in the sense of the 17th century English radical, was a “ranter”; in American terms, he was a Paul Revere whose job it was to sound the alarm. Indeed, some of his writings recall the pamphlets of the decades of the American revolution where the address of numerous and often anonymous writers was to the “publick” of small farmers and artisans, as much as to those holding political and economic power. Much of his later writing may be compared to turn of the 20th century populist and socialist pamphleteers whose aim was to simultaneously educate and arouse workers and farmers to the evils of corporate power.

Yet in his most fertile period of intellectual work, the decade and a half ending with the publication of *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), with the possible exception of *The Power Elite,* Mills hardly expected to reach a popular, let alone mass public. Nevertheless, he always attempted to reach out to a wider public than did his fellow academics, even when he was formulating new theories, let alone engaging in public criticism. But Mills’s intention is entirely subversive of contemporary mainstream social science, especially the notion that intellectuals should remain neutral observers of economic, political and social life. While he performed his fair share of funded research—notably his study of Puerto Rico and the collective portraits of characteristic social types—most of his writing is addressed to potential and actual political publics. Following Marx and Weber, who at the end of his life was a major contributor in shaping the moral and legal framework of the Weimar Republic, Mills held that intellectuals and their ideas were embedded in the social antagonisms and struggles of their own time; they bring to their analysis a definite standpoint, whether or not they are prepared to acknowledge it.

Yet Mills adhered to none of the mainstream parties nor to those on the fringes of mainstream politics. While he was a figure of his own time (his main work was done in the 1940s and 1950s, when issues of sex, gender and ecology were barely blips on the screen), his position was congenitally critical—of the right, conservatives, liberals, the relatively tiny parties of the left and especially members of his own shrinking group, the independent leftists. Like one of his heroes, the economist and social theorist Thorstein Veblen, himself a pariah in his chosen

discipline, to paraphrase a famous aphorism of Marx, Mills was “in but not of” the academy insofar as he refuses the distinction between scholarship and partisanship. But, unlike Veblen, whose alienation from conventional economics was almost total, Mills was, for most of his professional career, a sociologist in his heart as much as his mind The rhetoric and the methods embodied in his books on American social structure—*The New Men of Power, White Collar,* and *The Power Elite*—are firmly rooted in the perspectives of mainstream American sociology at the end of the war. These perspectives owed as much to the methodological precepts of Emile Durkheim as they did to the critical theory of Karl Marx and Max Weber. Using many of the tools of conventional social inquiry: surveys, interviews, data analysis—charts included—Mills takes pains to stay close to the “data” until the concluding chapters.

But what distinguishes Mills from mainstream sociology, and from Weber, with whom he shares a considerable portion of his intellectual outlook, is the standpoint of radical social change, not of fashionable sociological neutrality. At the height of the Cold War and in the midst of the so-called McCarthy era, he fearlessly named capitalism as the system of domination from within one of its intellectual bastions, Columbia University, and distanced himself from ex-radicals among his colleagues who were busy “choosing the west,” otherwise giving aid and comfort to the witch-hunters, or neutering themselves by hiding behind the ideology of value-free scholarship. Anti-Stalinist to the core, toward the end of his life he was, nevertheless, accused of pro-Communist sympathies for his unsparing criticism of the militarization of America and his spirited defense of the Cuban revolution.

In the light of his later writings which, to say the least, held out little hope for radical social change in the United States *The New Men of Power*, Mills’s first major work, occupies a singular place in the Mills corpus. Written on the heels of the veritable general strike of industrial workers in 1946, and the conservative counterattack the following year embedded in the Taft-Hartley amendments to the Labor Relations Act, the study of America’s labor leaders argues that for the first time in history the labor movement, having shown its capacity to shape the political economy, possessed the practical requisites to become a major actor in American politics as well. But as both “as army general and a contractor of labor,” a “machine politician” and the head of a “social movement,” the labor leader occupies contradictory space. (Mills, 1948) By 1948, the year of publication of the first edition of *The New Men of Power,* buoyed by American capitalism’s unparalleled global dominance, a powerful conservative force was arrayed against labor’s recently acquired power and, according to Mills, had no intention of yielding more ground without an all-out industrial and political war. Yet, he found union leaders curiously unprepared for the struggle. Even as their cause was being abandoned by liberal allies, and belittled and besmirched by their natural enemies among the corporations and their ideological mouthpieces, right-wing intellectuals and conservative politicians, union leaders remained faithful to the Democratic party and to the New Deal, which was rapidly fading into history. Mills and his collaborator, Helen Schneider, found that the concept that working people needed a labor party to truly represent their political interests had declined from the perspective of most labor leaders whereas a decade earlier, the apex of industrial unionism, a majority favored the formation of such a party, despite their expedient support of

the Democrats.

You might say that Mills's notion of power owes much to Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Just as Machiavelli reminds the prince that the old rules of the feudal oligarchy no longer suffice to retain power but that a public has formed which intends to call the ruler to account for his actions, in his book on the labor leaders Mills is, at first, in dialogue with a leadership increasingly attracted to oligarchical rule, and to the liberal center and whose love affair with established power has lasted to this day. His study admonishes the labor leadership to attend to the post-war shift that endangers theirs and their members' power. Arguing that the "main drift" is away from the collaboration between business and labor made necessary and viable by the war he suggests that labor leaders of "great stature" must come to the fore before labor is reduced. "Now there is no war," but there is a powerful war machine and conservative reaction against labor's power at the bargaining table.

"Today, knit together as they are by trade associations, the corporations steadily translate economic strength into effective and united political power. The power of the federal state has increased enormously. The state is now so big in the economy, and the power of business is so great in the state, that unions can no longer seriously expect even the traditional short-run economic gains without considering the conditions under which their demands are politically realizable." Top down rule, which implies keeping the membership at bay is, according to Mills, inadequate to the new situation where a military-industrial alliance was emerging, among whose aims was to weaken and otherwise destroy the labor movement.

How to combat this drift? Mills forthrightly suggests that the labor leader become the basis for the formation of a "new power bloc." Rather than make deals on the top with powerful interests, "he will have to accumulate power from the bottom. . . . If the democratic power of members is to be used against the concentrated power of money, it must in some way create its own political force . . . the left would create an independent labor party" based on labor's formidable economic strength. At the same time, Mills argues, it must enlarge its own base to include the "underdogs"—few of whom are in the unions. By underdogs Mills does not mean those at the very bottom. They are, in his view, too habituated to "submission." He means the working poor, the unskilled who were largely left out of the great organizing wave of the 1930s and the war years. And he calls for the organization of elements of the new middle class and the rapidly growing white collar strata whose potential power, he argues, will remain unrealized unless they are organized.

One may read the *New Men of Power* with a number of pairs of eyes. At minimum it can be read as a stimulating account of the problems and prospects facing post-World War II American labor. It is descriptively comprehensive of the state of organized labor and the obstacles which it faced in this period. If Mills was mistaken to believe that unions would have to become an independent political force to meet the elementary economic demands of their memberships, it may be argued that this limitation applies only to the first three decades after the war. Unions did deliver, and in some cases handsomely, to a substantial minority of the American working class. They organized neither the "underdogs" nor the new middle class and

white collar clerical, technical and professional workers who were all but ignored by the postwar labor movement, but forged a new social compact with large employers for their own members. For a third of the labor force in unions, and a much larger percentage of industrial workers, they succeeded in negotiating what may be called a “private” welfare state, huge advances in their members’ standard of living and a high degree of job security and individual protection against arbitrary discharge and other forms of discipline.

Ironically, this book is far more accurate in its central prognostication of labor’s decline for the years since 1973. Labor has paid a steep price for its refusal to heed Mills’s admonition to forge its own power bloc. Buffeted by economic globalization, corporate mergers and the deindustrialization of vast areas of the northeast and midwest and by the growth of the largely non-union south as the industrial investment of choice, many unions have despaired of making new gains and are hanging on to their declining memberships for dear life. Labor is, perhaps irreversibly, on the defensive. In this period, union density—the proportion of union members to the work force—has been cut in half. Collective bargaining stills occurs regularly in unionized industries and occupations and employers still sign contracts. But the last two decades are marked by labor’s steady retreat from hard-won gains. In many instances, collective bargaining as yielded to collective begging.

Corporations and their political allies have succeeded in rolling back one of the most important features of the New Deal-era reforms, the provision of a minimum income for the long-term unemployed (pejoratively coded as “welfare” by post-New Deal politicians). Many who still collect checks are forced to work in public and private agencies for minimum wages, in some states replacing union labor. Social Security is on the block and privatization of public goods, especially schools and health care facilities, seems to be the long-term program of conservatives and many in the liberal center.

Mills recognizes, as few labor leaders do, the importance of reaching out to the various publics that frame the political landscape. During the era of the social compact, union leaders saw little value in taking labor’s case to the public either during strikes or important legislative campaigns. As junior partners of the power élite they were often advised to keep conflicts in the “family” and rely on lobbying, influence with leading politicians through electoral support, and other traditionally élite tactics to achieve their goals. Labor leaders would rarely divulge the issues in union negotiations and during the final stages of bargaining because they agreed to a press blackout. Only as an act of desperation, when an organizing drive or a strike was in its losing stage, did some unions make public statements. Following Mills’s advice, one might argue, especially for public employees unions and unions in major national corporations, the public is always the third party at the bargaining table and the struggle to win it over has generally be won by management.

The ambiguity comes in when the subsequent writings are considered. Discouraged by the labor movement’s inability to reverse or halt the reactionary legislative and political offensive, by the early 1950s Mills had abandoned hope that the labor movement was capable of stemming the tide of almost complete corporate capitalist domination of economic, political

and cultural life. Discussion of the labor movement's social weight is largely absent from *White Collar*, published in 1951, only three years after *The New Men of Power*. *The Power Elite,* which appeared in 1956, more or less permanently consigns organized labor to a subordinate status within the pantheon of national power. In Mills's view the moment had come and gone when unions could even conceive of making a qualitative difference in power arrangements. Whereas in 1948, Mills's address was chiefly to the labor leaders themselves—it was both a careful sociological portrait of these new men of power and an attempted dialogue with them—the subsequent works do not have a specific labor public in mind.

It was the theory of mass society, a concept that spans radical and conservative critiques of late capitalism, that informed Mills's later pessimism. Mills was a leading figure in the sociology of "mass" culture and mass society which developed along several highly visible lines in the 1940s and 1950s. He observed the increasing homogenization of American culture and brilliantly linked some of its more egregious features to the decline of the democratic public. While his rhetoric was distinctly in the American vein, his views paralleled, and were crucially influenced by, those of Theodore Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, the leading theorists of the Frankfurt school. While there is little evidence that he was similarly impressed by psychoanalysis, like them he linked cultural massification to mounting political conformity associated with the emergence of fascism and other authoritarian movements in nearly all advanced industrial societies.

This pioneering study of the emergence of the middle class of salaried professional, technical and clerical employees situates the spread of mass culture after World War I to their growing significance in advanced industrial societies. Consistent with his emerging obsession with questions of political and social power and of the prospects for radical social transformation, *White Collar* may be read as an assessment not only of the occupational situation of the various strata of the middle class in the manner of traditional sociological analysis, but of the social psychology of what Mills terms the "new" middle class—the rapidly growing strata of salaried professional, technical and administrative employees—many of them working in large corporations. The book opens with an obituary of the "old" middle class—farmers, small merchants and manufacturers—perhaps the leading class of the 18th and first half of 19th century. The transformation of property from a welter of small independent producers and merchants to large concentrations of capital which marked the second half of the 19th century reduced the economic and political influence of the old middle class to the middle levels of power, mostly in local communities. The functions of administration, sales and distribution grew faster than manufacturing, but even in production industries the traditional blue collar industrial work force expanded more slowly than the bureaucracies of the various strata of white collar employees.

By World War I, the oligopolistic corporations in basic industries such as steel and energy, and large light-manufacturing industries such as textiles and durable consumer goods, banking and insurance, and wholesaling and retail enterprises, were hiring huge armies of clerical employees and sales personnel, and smaller but important coteries of engineers, technicians and managers, the latter growing numerically with the decline of the family owned and

operated firm. To be sure the small firm has survived, according to Mills, but small business of all types is increasingly unstable:

Nationally, the small businessman is overpowered, politically and economically, by big business; he therefore tries to ride with and benefit from the success of big business on the national political front, even as he fights the economic effects of big business on the local and state front. (Mills 1951, 51)

Small entrepreneurs go in and out of business, their chance of survival diminishing with the growth and scope of large scale enterprises: grocery chains, department stores and large manufacturing corporations all of which are able to benefit from economies of scale and ample supplies of capital with which to invest in technological innovation to drive prices down and their small business competitors out of the marketplace.

Among the diverse strata of the new middle class the managers, according to Mills, occupy a unique place. The "managerial demiurge" signifies a new form of power, and not only at the workplace. Their numbers are growing rapidly and, to the degree they run corporate and government bureaucracies, "the managerial type of man becomes more important in the total social structure." (Mills 1951, 77) While the top managers are given the task of controlling the underlying population, at every level of economic, political and cultural activity—middle managers, supervisors and line foreman, as well—the job of coordination and of control expands with the complexity of the occupational structure and the manifold problems associated with advanced capitalism. Mills accepts the idea, first advanced by Berle and Means in the classic *Modern Corporation and Private Property*, that advanced capitalist societies are marked by the separation of ownership and control in the everyday functions of the large corporate enterprise, the owner has gradually handed more power to the manager. In turn, government and private corporations are run as rationalized bureaucracies rather than in the image of the individual corporate tycoon of the late 19th century who ran his business like an old fashioned sovereign.

Although little more than elevated wage workers and, for this reason, deprived by their subordination to management, of the work autonomy enjoyed by the "old" middle class, the salaried professional and technical strata remain culturally tied to capital. Mills saw little hope for their unionization as long as mass culture—their indigenous culture—was the "the main drift" of mass society. On the one hand, reared in images of American exceptionalism, they were the embodiments of the cultural aspiration for individual social mobility; on the other, their growth was accompanied by the proletarianization of professional and technical strata, proletarian because they neither owned their own productive property nor controlled their labor. Some may earn higher salaries than industrial workers but, in contrast to unionized workers who have the protection of a collective bargaining agreement limiting management's rights, they were subordinated to arbitrary managerial authority in the performance of their tasks. Yet, their eyes were fixed on the stars. Lacking a secure class identity which is intrinsic to those engaged in the production and appropriation of things, as producers of "symbols" they were likely to remain an atomized mass, an oxymoron which signified what Erik Olin Wright

later described as the “contradictory class location” into which they were thrust. As for the clerical and administrative employees they were cogs in the vast machinery of the “enormous file”; they were keepers of information and of the proliferating records accumulated by the growing significance of sales. (Mills 1951 189-214)

In the absence of social movements capable of making a genuine difference in power relations, these studies are directed to the general, largely “liberal center” for whom Mills never ceased to have mixed feelings. The liberals were a necessary ingredient of any possible grand coalition for social change, but this center was marked by “looseness of its ideas,” an attribute which led it to “dissipate their political attention and activity.” Yet, in the wake of the failure of the labor leaders to face the challenge posed by the rightward drift of American politics, the hardening of corporate resistance to labor’s economic demands, the freezing of the political environment by the cold war and the virtual disappearance of the left, especially the independent left, until the late 1950s Mills’s public address shifted decisively to the center, even as his political position remained firmly on the independent, non-communist left.

The central category which suffuses Mills’ social thought and to which he returned again and again was that of power, especially the mechanisms by which it is achieved and retained by élites in the economy and social institutions. This is the signal contribution of the Italian social theorists Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto to Mills’s conceptual arsenal. In Pareto’s conception, élites, not classes, constitute the nexus of social rule. To derive his conception of power, Mills focuses neither on the labor process, the starting point for Marxists, nor on the market, the economic focus for Weberians. In contrast, Mills is a state theorist: élites are, for Mills, always institutionally constituted. He recognized the relative autonomy of corporations but consistent with the regulation era of advanced capitalism, he argued that the state had become the fundamental location of the exercise of economic, as much as political power. So, for example, in *The Power Elite,* his most famous and influential work, three “institutional orders” which are closely linked but spatially and historically independent—the corporate, the political and the military—constitute together what others might, in Marxist vocabulary, describe as a ruling class. Except it isn’t a “class” either in the sense of those who share a common relationship to the ownership and control of productive property or, as in Max Weber’s conception, groups that share a common interest in gaining access to market opportunities for employment and to acquire goods. The power élite is an *alliance* of the individuals who compose top layers of each of the crucial institutional orders and whose relative strength varies according to historical circumstances.

In the immediate post-World War II period, Mills detects the autonomous power of the military as, increasingly, the driving force in the alliance, just as the political élite occupied that position during the 1930s slump, when the provision of social welfare attained an urgency, lest by neglecting the needs of the underlying population, the system might be endangered. The military, as a relatively autonomous power center, gained sustenance from the rearmament program leading to World War II but since there was no peace after 1945, it retained its central position in the power structure. Almost immediately the United States and the Soviet Union, the two remaining superpowers, were engaged in a new “cold” war in which nuclear

and conventional weapons played an enormous economic as well as political role in world and domestic politics. And the cold aspects of the war were punctuated by discontinuous, but frequent, “hot” wars such as those in Korea, Southeast Asia, China, and Israel. Under these circumstances, the military, allying itself with those large corporations engaged in defense production, accumulated substantial independent power. Needless to say, the corporations, the holders of what he calls “big money,” are by no means ignored. After all, they remain the backbone of the entire system.

But in his analysis of the commanding heights, Mills is not content to describe the three institutional orders that comprise the power élite. He shows that the scope of its power embraces wide sections upon which the legitimacy of American society depends. Chief among them are the celebrities who, as the premier ornaments of mass society, are routinely recruited to lend prestige to the high officials of the three principal institutions of power. Political parties and their candidates eagerly showcase celebrities who support them; corporate executives regularly mingle with celebrities in Hollywood and New York at exclusive clubs and parties; and “warlords”—high military officers, corporate officials, their scientists and technologists engaged in perfecting more lethal weapons of mass destruction, the politicians responsible for executive and congressional approval of military budgets—congregate in many of the same social and cultural spaces as well as in the business suites of warfare. In short, following the muckraking tradition, but also international sociological discourse on power, *The Power Elite* uses the evidentiary method first perfected by the independent scholars such as Ferdinand Lundberg of tracing interlocking networks of social and cultural association as much as business relationship to establish the boundaries and contour of power. Moreover, in this work we can see the movement of individuals among the leading institutional orders that constitute the nexus of power, so that their difference tends to blur.

Naming the power élite as the only “independent variable” in American society, Mills was obliged to revise his earlier estimation of the labor movement. Barely eight years after designating the labor leaders “new men of power” who had to choose whether to lead the entire society in the name of working people and other subordinate groups he designated them a “dependent variable” in the political economy. Accordingly, he lost hope that, in any possible practical eventuality, working people and their unions would enter the historical stage as autonomous actors, at least until a powerful new left of intellectuals and other oppressed groups emerged to push them.

Mills’s identification of power with the triumvirate of corporation, military and national state, was offered in the same period that political theorists and sociologists were proclaiming the concept of pluralism as a more accurate description. Robert Dahl’s *Who Governs*, a study of the city of New Haven’s power structure, construed power in the metaphor of a parallelogram of forces, none of which dominated political decision-making. Business, labor, consumer groups such as parent associations, taxpayers and other organized groups constituted power relationships through the mechanisms of compromise and consensus. Although not denying that big business and the political directorate exhibited oligarchic tendencies, Dahl vehemently refuted the concepts associated with both Marxism and élite theory that there were clearly

articulated ruling groups that were the only genuine independent force. Dahl's study became not only a model for the understanding of local power, but of national power as well. As persuasive as Mills's argument may have been for progressives and other political skeptics, his views were subject to the severe criticism of many of his fellow academics as well as reviewers. For some he had failed to appreciate the resilience of American democracy, was importing ideas inherited from the non-applicable European context to American circumstances and, in any case, had offered yet another exercise in debunking.

II

He did his graduate work at Wisconsin under the mentorship of, among others, Hans Gerth, whose powerful mind was never matched by a body of equally compelling written work. In some respects, Mills gave an English language voice to Gerth's ideas (although the collaboration has lately been subject to critical scrutiny by some scholars who contend that Mills took advantage of Gerth). These ideas—a complex synthesis of Marx, Max Weber, Gaetano Mosca and Vilfedo Pareto—introduced a wide range of concepts into the study of modern institutional life. Crucial to Gerth and Mills's understanding of how modern institutions work was Weber's theory of bureaucracy, read through the pejorative connotation of its system of rules and occupational hierarchies as inimical to democratic decision-making. Rather than viewing bureaucracies as necessary institutions to make complex industrial societies work more efficiently as Weber argued, Gerth also provided Mills with the idea that bureaucratic control of institutions entailed domination, which Robert Michels extended to socialist organizations in his classic, *Political Parties.* For Michels the mechanism of domination was the leadership's monopoly over the means of communication. Mills sees the development of the state, no less than the labor movement as a series of highly institutionalized bureaucracies which, in contrast to his preferred model of unions—voluntary, democratically run and rank and file controlled organizations—were rapidly mutating into oligarchies of power.

Mills's dissertation, *Sociology and Pragmatism*, completed in 1943, was an explicit attempt to draw the implications of European sociological theory for the United States. He himself exemplified that connection. For pragmatism there is no question of intrinsic "truth" if by that term we designate the possibility that truth may be independent of the context within which a proposition about the social world is uttered. The truth of a proposition is closely tied to the practical consequences that might, under specific conditions, issue from it. And practical consequences may be evaluated only from the perspective of social interest. But, unlike John Dewey's concept, there is no "win-win" thinking here. In the end, Mills adhered to the notion that whether a particular power arrangement was desirable depended on whose ox was being gored.

Mills drew heavily upon Karl Mannheim's concept of ideology, but also adopted his lifelong preoccupation with the intellectuals whom Mannheim designated as the only social formation capable of independent thought and action.. Mannheim's major work *Ideology and Utopia* is a critique of the Marxist designation of the proletariat as a universal class and, particularly of Georg Lukács's argument that having adopted the standpoint of the proletariat which, in

relation to knowledge, has no interest in reproducing the mystifications which buttress bourgeois rule. According to Lukács, Marxism can penetrate the veil of reified social relations to reveal the laws of motion of capitalism and, therefore, produce a truthful account of how society works. Mills was much too skeptical to buy into this formulation; Mannheim's relativism—that "standpoint" thinking inevitably led to partial knowledge—was more attractive and corresponded to his own pragmatic vision. Accordingly, knowledge is always infused with interest, even if it occurs behind the backs of actors. But Mills leans toward ideology as an expression of intentionality and this characterization is particularly applied to the labor leaders who are the subjects of *The New Men of Power,* and the business élite described in an essay republished in the collected essays, *Power Politics and People* and later incorporated in *The Power Elite*. Lacking an explicit ideology does not mean that labor or corporate leader can dispense with the tools of persuasion. But according to Mills, these are the tools of a "practical politician" rather than that of an ideologue. Thus, Mills's employment of the word "rhetoric" to describe how leaders persuade and otherwise justify their constituencies of policies and programs that may or may not be in their interest.

Mills was also a close reader of the political and social thought of John Dewey, perhaps America's preeminent philosopher of the first half of the 20th century and one of the leading figures in the development of pragmatism. From Dewey and from his interlocutor, Walter Lippmann, whose debate with Dewey on whether there was a chance for a genuine democratic society and governance in an America increasingly dominated by experts, was among the most important intellectual events of the 1920s. Mills derived the concept of the "public" or, in his usage, "publics" from this controversy. By the time Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1921) appeared, many intellectuals expressed doubts that the ideal of the public as the foundation of a democratic polity, which made decisions as well as conferring consent, was at all possible in the wake of the emergence of mass society with its mass publics and massified culture.

Lippmann argued, persuasively to many, that a public of independent-minded individuals was, by the end of World War I, decisively foreclosed by the complexity of international relations, by advanced technology, the reduction of genuine knowledge from which to adduce opinion to slogans by the mass media, and the growing role of the state. For a society of citizens, in the sense of the Greek city-state, who are capable of making the vital decisions affecting the polity, he held out no hope. Given the conditions for its formation, the public was shortsighted, prejudiced and, most of all, chronically ill-informed. While defending the claim that the élite of experts, which came into its own with the consolidation of the modern state and the modern corporation, was as desirable as it was inevitable in complex societies, Lippmann retained a trace of his former socialist skepticism. He wanted a democratic public to force experts and political leaders to obtain consent on a regular basis and, through the ballot, to pass judgement on their quasi-sovereign actions. Thus, democracy was conceived purely negatively, as the barrier against authoritarian, technocratic rule.

Deeply affected by this powerful argument against participatory democracy, John Dewey was moved to respond. *The Public and its Problems* (1925) is, for all intents and purposes, the most penetrating case for an active polity and for radical democracy any American has ever written.

With Dewey, Mills held that the promiscuous use of the term "democracy" to describe the de facto plebiscite of electoral politics, and other mechanisms by which consent is achieved by representative political institutions, is unwarranted. The institutions of the liberal state still need the consent of the governed. But the legislative and executive branches are increasingly beholden to the holders of institutional power, not their electors, except insofar as the public refuses to confer consent to policies which they perceive to be contrary to their interests and, as in the case of social security "reform," succeeds in staying the hand of legislators beholden to corporate power, at least for a time. Having entered into an alliance with the military and corporate orders, the political directorate becomes a self-contained body, undemocratic in both the process of its selection and its maintenance.

Dewey's concept of democracy recalls the New England town meeting in which the "public" was not a consumer of the work of active and influential people, but a participant, a decision-maker, in the community's political and social life. In this respect, it is important to recall Mills's "Letter to the New Left" (1960). The letter outlined the principles of participatory democracy on the basis of Dewey's concept of the public, and was, perhaps, the single most influential document in the early history of Students for a Democratic Society, one of the key organizations in the development of the social movements of the 1960s. SDS's program, enunciated in its manifesto, *The Port Huron Statement* was constructed around the concept/demand for "participatory" democracy in which "ordinary people" could control the "decisions that affected their lives." It presupposed the same distrust of the state and its branches that Mills evinced years earlier. But unlike the immediate post-World War II years when, notwithstanding its de facto expiration, the New Deal still inspired broad support for what Herbert Croly termed *The Promise of American Life* (which Mills names as the most important work of liberal statism), two decades of militaristic statism and the appearance of a new generation of political activism made Mills's radical democratic appeal more audible.

III

Mills was also a great taxonomist. With his mentor, Hans Gerth, he published in 1953 a major social psychology, *Character and Social Structure,* which situates the self firmly in the social and historical context which shapes and is shaped by it. This work is, perhaps, the premier instance of Mills's efforts to combine theoretical social science with the distinctly American psychology of William James and George Herbert Mead, but in these days when the little boxes of the mind seem to pervade social thought, this book languishes in the archives of largely unread masterworks. Gerth and Mills's bold juxtapositions are simply too adventuresome for a social science academy for which conventional wisdom seems to be the farthest horizon of possibility.. And his numerous essays covered the broad expanse of issues in American politics and culture, a range which has caused more than one detractor to complain that he is "all over the place." In this respect, Mills is a true scion of the great thinkers who founded the social sciences. Their task was to provide a philosophical scaffolding to the disciplines, a project which Mills understood did not end with the canonical works. As a pragmatist, he was acutely aware that theory requires constant renewal and revisions and that, contrary to much current thinking, the problem is not one of "applications" of received wisdom but to interrogate the

wisdom in the light of contemporary developments. So, even as Mills borrows concepts such as "élite" from eminent forebears, he refuses the hierarchical thinking that informed the writings of theorists such as Mosca and Pareto. For example, he invests new significance to it in the process of investigating historically-situated élites. As a result, the labor union élite and the power (ruling) élite display different characteristics, although in *The New Men of Power* we can see the first pass at the development of a new theory.

His main theoretical project, explicated most fully in *Character and Social Structure,* was to situate the biographies of leading economic and political actors—labor leaders, the main figures in business, military and political institutions—within the social structure and the spatio-temporal context which set the limits and provided the opportunities for their activity. This methodological imperative is designed to account for individual variation of broad types, but also demonstrate the degree to which the social structure—explicitly named in terms of key institutional orders sets, at a specific time and specific place, the limits as well as the opportunities for individual and group action. Thus, our biographies mediate, and are mediated by, the institutional frameworks which condition decision-making. While, except in *White Collar* Mills is interested mainly in describing and explaining the structure of power, rather than of the worlds of the relatively powerless, this work is always undertaken in the interest of reconstructing a democratic public.

> we shall use this term *psychic structure* (emphasis in the original) to refer to man conceived as an integration of perception, emotion, and impulse. Of course there are other psychic functions, memory and imagination for example, but we shall limit our terms at this point. For our purpose, "psychic structure" will refer to when, how and why man feels, perceives and wills.

At the core of Gerth and Mills's theory are the concepts of "institution" and "self." The notion of institutional order connotes the complex of institutions which, taken together, constitute what we loosely designate as the structure of power in "society," chiefly the political, economic and military orders. Thus conceived the character structure of individuals formed by physical, and social conditions, particularly those of childhood biography, including family and schooling prepares them for playing certain "roles" within the institutional orders to which they gravitate or are assigned by virtue of their education and training, situations which themselves are the outcome of certain interactions and relationships. The formation of the self in childhood is crucial for structuring the life chances of individuals, conditioning, if not completely determining the ways they structure knowledge, their emotional and volitional proclivities. But these processes are only relatively unique in individuals; conditions of social location, class, race and ethnicity, and education—play a decisive part in shaping the choices available to whole groups of people. The basic unit of analysis then, is not the individual but collective selves.

Thus his writings are suffused with "ideal types"—Weber's methodological prescription to fashion composite profiles against which to measure any particular instance of the type—arranged horizontally as well as vertically. The models assembled in *The New Men of*

Power—of labor leaders, or in *The Power Elite*, where he provides a collective portrait of business leaders, and in his essays published in the collection *Power Politics and People* which contains several composites of the various publics which he addresses and to which he is obliged to respond—give a glimpse of Mills's lifelong approach to social knowledge: first, produce a composite profile of the subject. Then, provide detailed historically-informed descriptions of the context within which the subject(s) operate, and evaluate the relative salience of each element of this context to how the subject is shaped. Then, return to the subject by unpacking the composite to break down the different social and character types. Finally, re-place them in the larger political, economic and cultural situations. To what end? To find out what are the alternatives to the main drift of politics and ideologies. Needless to say, although a student of élites, Mills asks whether the democratic movement from below, of the rank and file union members, fractured publics of consumers and intellectuals, may succeed in overcoming the pervasive tendency toward oligarchic domination of government and civil life.

For most of his academic career Mills taught sociology at Columbia University. He produced social knowledge but was also an intellectual agitator. He was deeply interested in advancing the science of sociology as a means of giving us a wider understanding of how society worked. But, from the late 1940s when, at age thirty two, Mills and Helen Schneider produced their landmark study of the American labor union leaders, he remained a close student of social movements; his writings span analyses of the labor movement, the student left, the peace movement and others. He swam, intellectually, against the current, yet unlike many independent leftists who saw only defeat in the post-war drift toward militaristic-corporate political economy and despaired of relevant political practice, he was, above all, a practical thinker whose interest was always to describe the "main" chance as a dead end and to counterpose the chances for leftward social change. Consequently, even when he is the most descriptive of, say, labor leaders, and portrays the new middle class in terms of subordination and as allies of the leading élites, his eyes never strayed far from the question of " what is to be done?" What are the levers for changing the prevailing relations of power? How can those at or near the bottom emerge as historical subjects?

Mills is aware that to reach beyond the audience of professional social scientists he is obliged to employ a rhetoric that, as much as possible, stays within natural, even colloquial language. Addressing the general reader as well as his diminishing audience of academic colleagues, Mills conveyed often difficult and theoretically sophisticated concepts in plain, but often visual prose, described by one critic as "muscular." And, perhaps most famously, he was a phrasemaker. For example, his concept of the "main drift" to connote conventional wisdom, as well as centrist politics encapsulates in a single phrase what others require paragraphs to explain. And, instead of using the Marxian-loaded term "crisis" or the technical dodge "recession," to describe conditions of economic woe he employed the colloquial "slump." He characterizes the rise of industrial unions after 1935 as the "big story" for American labor, a term which encompasses history and common perception. But the imperatives of the Cold War—especially the emergence of the military as a dominant institutional order—constitutes the big story of the immediate post-war era.

Mills wrote scholarly works but, in keeping with the style of a public intellectual, he was also a pamphleteer, a proclivity that often disturbed his colleagues and, in one of the more odious forms of academic hubris, led some to dismiss him as a "mere journalist." In fact, this dismissal may, in addition to his boldness in attacking the big themes of social theory and analysis, account for the sad truth that since the late 1970s his major works are virtually unread in social science classrooms, have disappeared from many scholarly references, and are largely undiscussed in the academic trade. In the last decade of his life, manifestos and indictments of the prevailing social and political order issued from his pen as frequently as sociological works. In fact, *The Power Elite*, which has inspired a sub-discipline whose academic practitioners include G. William Domhoff, America's leading consumer advocate and anti-corporate campaigner, Ralph Nader, and a veritable army of "public interest" researchers, has always been controversial on theoretical grounds, but also, despite its often meticulous and comprehensive collection of "data," criticized for lack of objectivity in its clear democratic bias. In these days when most members of the professorate have retreated from public engagement except as consultants for large corporations, media experts, and recipients of the grant largesse of corporate foundations and government agencies who want their research to assist in policy formulation, or confine their interventions to professional journals and meetings, Mills remains an embarrassing reminder of one possible answer to this veritable privatization of legitimate intellectual knowledge. In 1939 his colleague Robert S. Lynd published a probing challenge to knowledge producers of all sorts called *Knowledge for What?* He asked the fundamental question: to whom is the knowledge producer responsible? To the state? To private corporations? To publics that are concerned with issues of equality social justice? (Robert S. Lynd, 1939)

Mills rejects as spurious the prevailing doctrine according to which the social investigator is obliged to purge the work of social and political commitment. His values infuse the sociological research and theorizing and he never hides behind methodological protestations of neutrality. Mills is, instead, a partisan of movements of social freedom and emancipation while, at the same time, preserving his dedication to dry-eyed, critical theory and dispassionate, empirical inquiry. An advocate of a democratic, radical labor movement he was, nevertheless, moved to indict its leadership, not by fulmination, but by a careful investigation of how unions actually worked in the immediate post-war period. A self-described "man of the left," in the late 1940s Mills provoked his left publics to outrage when he concluded that the "old" socialist and communist movements had come to the end of the road. By the late fifties, as the frost of the Cold War melted a bit after the rise of Nikita Khruschev to power in the Soviet Union and the power élite's recognition that the anti-Communist purges had hurt U.S. domestic as well as foreign policy, he was loudly proclaiming the need for a "new" left that had the courage to throw off the ideological baggage of the past, especially Marxist orthodoxy and Stalinism.

Like Jean-Paul Sartre, whose *Critique of Dialectical Reason* appeared in 1960, he came to regard tradition, even radical tradition, as a political albatross. He never used Sartre's fancy term "practico-inert" to mark the encrusted habits that induce people to reproduce the past in the present but he was a persistent critic of the habituation of the left to old ideas. A withering opponent of the Communists, sensing the impending doom of the Soviet Union after the

opening provided by the Khruschev's revelations of Stalin's crimes at the 20thCommunist Party Congress in 1956, he was among the first to urge the young to disdain their elders' preoccupation with the "Russian" question and instead attend with fresh eyes and hearts to the tasks at hand: to oppose U.S. intervention in the affairs of revolutionary societies and to establish the framework for a radical democratic society.

I have no doubt he was right to urge the young radicals to distance themselves from the past, at least in the short or intermediate term. But he never made clear that he himself had been reared, politically, on the Russian question and forgot that those who ignore addressing the failure of the revolution were doomed to relive it, an eventuality he was never cursed to witness. That the New Left, which soon captured the imagination of an entire generation, went awry may not be attributed exclusively to its refusal to address really existing socialisms of the Stalinist variety. But, it was entirely disarmed when, in the wake of the heating up of the war in southeast Asia, various Marxist ideologies became matters of urgent debate; most young leftists found themselves overwhelmed. They were moved by guilt as much as ignorance to confer uncritical support to the Vietnamese communists and even hailed the efforts of Pol Pot in Cambodia. By 1970, many reared the New Left were no longer Mills' spiritual children; they all but renounced his democratic faith in favor of a "third world" dogma of national liberation at all costs. But, ironically, Mills himself was not immune from such enthusiasms.

The book-length pamphlets were received as more than controversial, not only because they were, in many minds, notoriously heretical for their tacit violation of academic insularity, but also because they broke from the main tenets of the Cold War anti-Communist consensus at a time when, under siege, political repression was still alive and well in the United States. *The Causes of World War Three* (1958) is, in many respects, a popularization and application to the international scale of *The Power Elite*. It depicts world politics in terms of the rivalry to two power blocs, one led by the United States and the other by the Soviet Union, both of which are governed by irresponsible élites whose conduct of the nuclear arms race threatens the very existence of humanity. Written in a period when one could count the number of radicals with full-time appointments in American universities on one hand and when the preponderant ex-radicals had "chosen the west," this equalization of responsibility for the world crisis between east and west endeared Mills neither to the communists and their periphery, for whom the Soviet Union was virtually blameless for the state of things, nor to Cold War liberals for whom any suggestion that United States foreign policy could contribute to the chances for the outbreak of World War III was as shocking as it was absurd.

Hidden in the pages of his work is the influence of the one rather obscure strain of radicalism which, after the war, declared that both camps were forms of a new anti-democratic, militaristic capitalism and boldly, but futilely, called for the formation of a "third" camp whose base would be a radicalized labor movement in alliance with other anti-capitalist elements of the population. The project failed since at the time of its formulation, the leading unions in every capitalist country were busy making deals with their own corporations and with the capitalist state, and leftists were divided between those who were safely ensconced in the Cold War consensus or, despite everything, remained Soviet apologists. Mills's appeal to the

"public," translated in this context to an appeal to the middle class liberal center, proved more effective for it corresponded to the emergence of a mass movement against the testing and use of nuclear weapons and for an end to the Cold War. Needless to say, the preponderance of American labor leaders, including Walter Reuther, the liberal president of the largest industrial union, the auto workers, were aligned with their own government's policies and were convinced that the price of demilitarization was nothing less than a new slump. And even as he discounted the politicos as allies to the top layers of corporate and military power, Mills was equally skeptical that the intellectuals, the social type upon which political dissent conventionally relies, were adequate to the occasion.

A self-declared independent leftist (which, in the Cold War era meant an anti-Stalinist, but unaligned radical), Mills had been influenced by Trotskyism early in his life. He carefully separated the still influential Communists from radicalism. The Communists were influential precisely because the party had been an important vehicle for organizing major industrial unions and for bringing militant workers into the New Deal. During the war, they played a major role in enforcing the wartime no-strike pledge and the government's drive for productivity. Mills believed that whatever oppositional politics they evinced after the war was due, almost exclusively, to the chasm between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Listen Yankee (1961) an exemplary instance of Mills's penchant for rowing upstream, was, during its early years, a fierce defense of the Cuban revolution when, even for many anti-Stalinist radicals, it appeared that the regime was dedicated to raising living standards and was still open to a democratic society. At a time when even the liberal icon, Oregon Senator Wayne Morse, was a vocal advocate of counterrevolution and supported the Kennedy administration's ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion, Mills asserted the right of the Cuban people to determine their own destiny and sharply condemned U.S. policy in the Caribbean and Latin America. He excoriated liberals and conservatives alike for their support of anti-popular regimes such as that of Batista in Cuba and Somoza's brutal Nicaraguan dictatorship, pointing out how the U.S. government had opposed democratic efforts by financing military counterinsurgency, especially against the Arbenz regime in Guatemala as well as Cuba's new revolutionary government. While he had been a lifelong anti-Communist, Mills saw the Cuban revolution as a harbinger of the long struggle of peasants and workers for liberation from colonialism and imperialism and predicted serious future confrontations between the spreading insurgencies and the United States which, under Democratic and Republican national administrations alike, became the main defender of the dictators.

Indeed, for the length of the 1960s and beyond, Mills's provocative intervention seemed prescient. In Colombia, Douglas Bravo led a formidable armed uprising and Che Guevara led a band of guerillas into the Bolivian jungle which, like the Colombian revolt, failed. But, with Cuba's material help the Sandanistas in Nicaragua and the National Liberation Front in El Salvador were alive with revolutionary activity and, by the mid-1960s the dormant Puerto Rican independence movement revived under Marxist leadership which closely identified with the Cuban revolution. In the 1970s, Maurice Bishop organized a successful uprising in Grenada which openly aligned itself with the Cuban revolution and Michael Manley's democratically-

elected left social-democratic government in Jamaica forged close ties with Cuba. However much he was smitten, Mills framed much of his own discourse in terms of the significant of these events for America's neo-colonial foreign policy and for America's future. Lacking the tools of discriminating evaluation, many young radicals not only gave their unconditional support but enlisted as volunteers in Grenada, Cuba and Nicaragua's education and health efforts.

IV

Mills is both an exhilarating exemplar of the role and reach of the public radical intellectual, and at the same time, a sobering reminder of how far the human sciences have descended since the end of the Vietnam War. For even in death Mills was an inspiration to a generation of young intellectuals estranged from the suburban nightmare of post-World War II America and eager to shape their own destiny, and to some in his own generation who, in fear and trembling, had withdrawn from public involvement, but yearned to return. The decline of social engagement and political responsibility that accompanied the ebbing of the impulse to reform and revolution in the 1970s and 1980s, witnessed the shift of labor, socialist and social liberal parties and movements to the liberal center. Many erstwhile radical intellectuals who retained their public voice moved steadily to the right, motivated, they said, by the authoritarianism of the New as well as the Old Left, and by their conviction that American capitalism and its democratic institutions were the best of all possible worlds.

He suffered the sometimes scorching rebuke of his contemporaries and, even as he won the admiration of the young as well as the tattered battalions of left intellectuals, had severed his ties with much of the liberal center which sorely needed to hear his argument that, in face of the awesome and almost complete hegemony of the power élite, American democratic institutions were in a state of almost complete meltdown. That recently a small body of scholars have revisited his legacy should be welcomed. The question of whether intellectuals will remain tucked into their academic bunkers depends not only on the depressions or wars to pry them out. Indeed the economic slumps that have punctuated the last two decades have failed to move most to utterance, although there is evidence that, after 9/11 some radical intellectuals have engaged in protest against the U.S. promulgated war on Iraq or have entered the debate on the side of the government. In the final reckoning, even if, after 1950, most of Mills's tirades were self-motivated, although a decade later Mills looked to an aroused coterie of young intellectuals as the source of a new democratic public, it is usually resurgent labor and other social movements to which intellectuals respond. While it can be argued that prior to 9/11 there were signs of revival in the political opposition, it remains to be seen whether, after suffering the defeats of the early years of the 21st century, the radical, nomadic spirit of C. Wright Mills will inculcate the minds and hearts of the intellectuals and activists upon whom he bestowed so much hope.

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Vision of the Gods: An Inquiry into the Meaning of Photography

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

Photography is ubiquitous within global culture, but we hardly understand its meaning. And we have only a dim comprehension of its origin. Unlike cinema, which contains the complexities of motion and montage, the photograph is simple and, for the most part, brutally realistic. Perhaps the photograph has seemed too obvious to merit prolonged scholarly attention. Histories of the medium abound, but their authors follow a pattern exemplified by Alison and Helmut Gernsheim's distinguished History of Photography, first published in 1955. By the standard account, the first inklings of photography appeared when a 5th century scholar noticed a camera-like phenomenon, and culminated in the 1820s, when Nicephore Niepce doped a pewter plate with light-sensitive chemicals and exposed it within a camera obscura. At their most comprehensive, standard histories include references to the mediaeval scientists who experimented with pinhole optics and ultimately invented the camera obscura.

Though the standard account is correct in its details, it neglects the broader context of photography. Photography is an evolutionary phenomenon, not a fixed process, and it has drastically altered society at each stage of refinement. Starting with simple devices, the medium has branched into an enormous family of technologies that includes cinema, television and digital imagery. Individuals use cameras, but the medium is far more powerful in the hands of corporations and the state. Optical media entertain and inform, impress and oppress; they permeate everyday life, yet cultural theory does not approach this variety from a coherent base of understanding. What ties together snapshots and surveillance? Theorists perceive the social effects of mass media, which range from liberation to abject dehumanization, but the origin of these effects has not been outlined. We need a paradigm that captures the common thread of photographic technologies, one that matches the sophistication of contemporary engineering. Current theory of the photograph depends on the camera, but the physical device is insufficient to explain the evolution of the optical media, particularly as it progresses toward the dematerialized realm of digital imagery and virtual reality.

Much has already been written about virtual reality. Though the medium is not yet viable, it has ample precedents ranging from Plato's Cave Passage to nineteenth century dioramas. The strongest precedent, however, is the virtual experience offered by photography and cinema, both of which derive, like the examples I just gave, from reflection upon optics. Whether or not it comes to pass, the idea of a virtual environment should serve as a boundary condition for photographic theory, because it illustrates the profound impact of optics on society. For most of its existence humanity has experienced the world through natural faculties, but the introduction of optical media has reorganized perception and replaced subjectivity. As a consequence, individuals have become part of increasingly larger collectives where both

thought and experience are defined by objective standards. The environment has become mediated, defined by surveillance and institutions, and, as Jean Baudrillard has poignantly described, experience is often equated with media.

The central issues in photographic theory are defined by the history of optics. The study of vision and light has an ancient pedigree which scholars have only nodded toward when discussing photography. Scientific optics matured by the 3rd century BCE, when Euclid codified its principles alongside its parent discipline, geometry. Organized as a set of formal principles, Euclid's *Geometry* describes the construction of forms in an abstract space, giving their appearance to an ideal intelligence. In contrast, his *Optics* described the behavior of light in relation to a situated viewer. Taken together, the two works present a theory of how the physical world is constituted in reality and appearance, with the latter describing how light transmits information from the physical, geometric realm to the eyes.

Euclid's optical study represents a high point of knowledge that remained almost unmatched until the scientist Ibn al-Haytham published his optical treatises in the 9th century.[1] Building on the work of Euclid and his successor, Claudius Ptolemy, Al-Haytham founded physiological optics, which distinguished the functioning of the eye from the behavior of light. He also laid the groundwork for the camera obscura by accurately explaining the pinhole effect which underlies its mechanism. Several centuries later, well after al-Haytham's *Optics* passed into Europe, the camera obscura emerged from the laboratory as a tool for artists, but it was not until the 1600s that Johannes Kepler discovered the proper operation of the eye. Much like a camera, human eyes augment the pinhole effect with a lens, bringing an inverted image to bear on a light-sensitive surface, the retina. (See Figure 1)

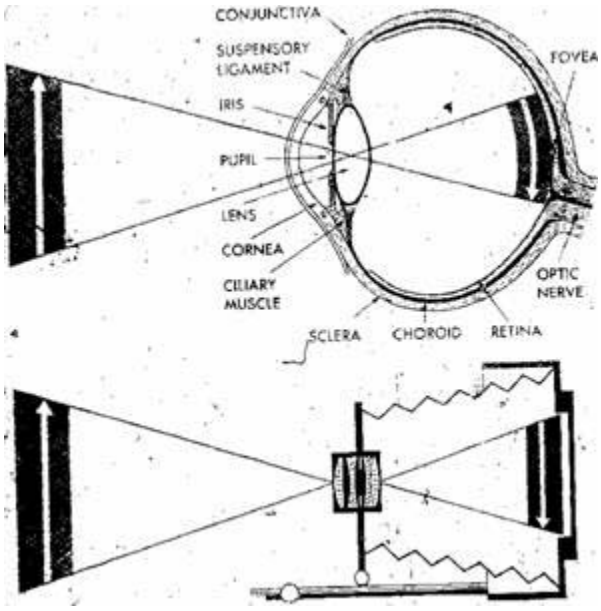

Figure 1: The structure of the eye compared to the camera
(Wald, 1953)

Unlike those who followed, Kepler considered retinal inversion to be an important problem. But

he despaired of solving it and left its resolution to later generations.2 Progress came slowly. Little was known about the nervous system until the nineteenth century, and only recently have scientists learned how to inspect thought in real time. Now we know how the brain apprehends the retinal image. But many questions still elude us. What effect does media have on perception? Has sharing images—sharing perceptions—affected individuality? Optical technologies permeate daily life, and, by bridging vast distances, they have changed the nature of vision. The personal has become institutional, mediated by cameras and computers, and we inhabit virtual bodies created by photography, the telephone and television. So our primary question might address how technology affects biology. Is technology a form of evolution? Has social evolution superseded biological evolution? Will governments and corporations completely subsume the individual, limiting choice to matters of consumption? In confronting these questions, optics is relevant to some of the most pressing issues in cultural theory and, for that matter, human existence.

Photography represents the growing intimacy of humanity with machines. Tools originally amplified physical strength, but, with the advent of tools like the abacus, the compass and eyeglasses, they have been applied increasingly to mental faculties, giving us both modern media and digital computers. And recent advances in bioengineering are giving tools a quasi-organic status, merging them with our bodies. In 1950, biologist George Wald said photography was the product of convergent evolution:

> Of all the instruments made by man, none resembles a part of his body more than the camera does the eye. Yet this is not by design. A camera is no more a copy of an eye than the wing of a bird is a copy of that of an insect. Each is the product of an independent evolution; and if this has brought the camera and the eye together, it is not because one has mimicked the other, but because both have had to meet the same problems, and have frequently done so in the same way. This is the type of phenomenon that biologists call convergent evolution, yet peculiar in that one evolution is organic, the other technological.3

Wald then makes structural, mechanical and chemical comparisons between eyes and the photographic process. The similarities are numerous. Both use a lens to project an image within a dark chamber, both correct for aberrations in form and color, and both apprehend images through a grid of photosensitive receptors. As the capstone to his argument, Wald ends his essay with a discussion of optography, the art of making images with eyes.

Willy Kuhne, a professor of physiology at the University of Heidelberg, invented optography in 1878. Kuhne was studying rhodopsin, the retinal pigment that changes state in response to light. During the course of his experiments, he realized that he might be able to take pictures with a living eye. He immobilized a rabbit and forced it to look at a window for three minutes. He then decapitated the animal, sliced open its eye, and soaked its retina in alum to fix the rhodopsin. The next day the dried retina revealed an image of the window. Two years later he repeated the process with the head of an executed criminal. The resulting optigram, which he reproduced in a drawing, is the only known picture taken with a human eye. Unfortunately, the

scene it displayed was unidentifiable. (See Figures 2 and 3)

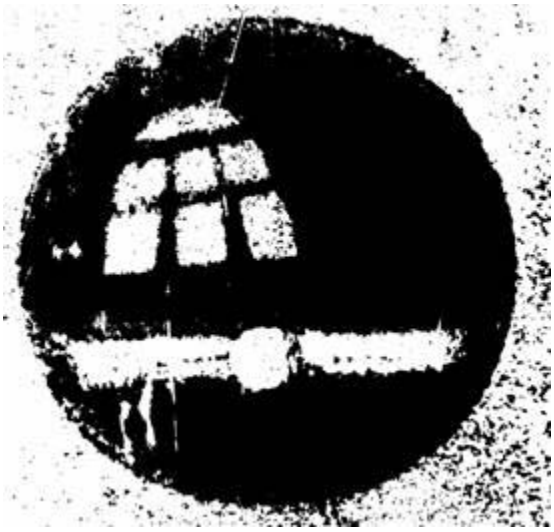

Figure 2: The rabbit's last view (Wald, 1953)

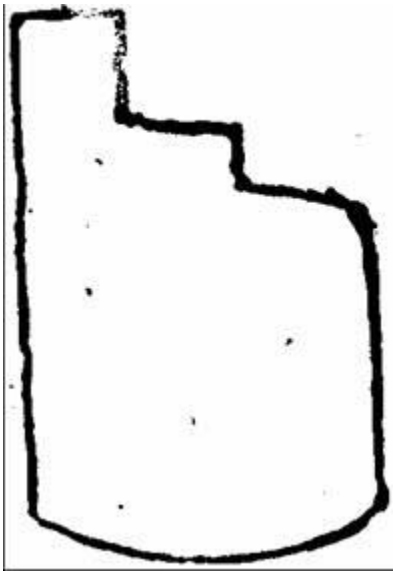

Figure 3: A human optigram
(Wald, 1953)

Evolutionary convergence explains the utility of cameras and casts a revealing light on media theory, particularly the work of Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan's descriptions of how media affect cognition seem hyperbolic, more metaphor than science, but if we accept Wald's conclusions, then the spread of media has a biological basis. Photography is an auxiliary form of perception. It amplifies vision, takes it to extremes of size, distance and speed. It extends the human nervous system, particularly when coupled to electronic distribution. Visual media are among the cornerstones of modern civilization, found in the service of law, science and industry, as well as the arts and personal life. When we examine the category of photography as a whole, including cinema, video and digital imagery with paper and film, we find a medium that mimics vision, providing sensations that bridge space and time. Photographs are concrete

perceptions that orient groups of people around a singular, objective experience. Along with social hierarchy, and other technologies of communication, photographic images constitute a body social that behaves according to common impulses.

Photography has thus developed along two axes. The first is a train of technical and scientific discovery that stretches deep into history. As far as we know, optics was invented by the mathematicians of ancient Greece, but its parent science, geometry, is of far older pedigree, having reached an advanced state in the pre-Classical cultures of Mesopotamia and Egypt. The other axis derives from the communication needs of the cultures that developed photography and related technologies. Each axis reinforces our understanding of the other, and, by linking the two together, we can describe the evolution of technologies which led from archaic times to photography then cinema, television and virtual reality. As I discuss in a larger work, *Archaeology of the Photograph*, a consistent set of social, political and economic goals has driven the emergence of these practices, and photography stands as the paradigm of both their physical appearance and mechanical functioning.

The Ontology of the Photograph

Cameras are the most obvious element of photography, but we should not stay preoccupied with them. Photographs are conveniently rendered by cameras, but the information within a photograph—the information that defines it—can be generated in several ways. Photorealist imagery can be produced by hand and computer, so we cannot rely solely on the camera to define photography. Nor can we place cameras at the beginning of the medium, for we still need to ask the question, “What is the origin of the camera?” Many histories of photography have been written, but only lately with the emergence of satellite surveillance and virtual reality, can we completely define the paradigm of optics. An unwritten history lies behind the development of photography.

To access this history, we cannot, as scholars have traditionally done, treat photography as a discrete industrial process. Photography is not a specific activity but a way of seeing, a mechanized form of perception. It is a technical approach to visual representation based on optics. (Or perspective: they mean the same thing in their original usage.) And photography is ultimately geometric since optics/perspective derives from the investigation of space. As we shall see, photography also relates to the physiology of vision, and its advances have tracked fundamental progress in the scientific understanding of cognition. Starting with its invention in the nineteenth century, photography projects forward into cinema, television and digital media. And it telescopes backward into earlier modalities based in painting, drawing, cartography and geometry. Media scholars have hinted at this history, but engineers have written it, and it remains inscribed in generations of tools. Photography is paradigmatic act of representation, one which blankets the environment with information. The expression of photographic technology has followed a path set in the formative days of civilization, and, ironically, its purpose is clearest in its earliest forms.

Like most machines, cameras automated processes previously done by hand. The tools of

Renaissance painters are obvious forebears to the camera which makes photography closely related to classical modes of representation like architecture and mapping. If we trace these practices—perspectival painting, architecture and cartography—to their collective origin, we arrive at the archaic civilization of Sumer and the technology of land surveying, or applied geometry. Surveying occupies a privileged place in the history of photography and, more generally, of technical drawing. It inspired theoretic geometry, which in turn spawned optics, astronomy and cartography, the first sciences. I will collectively refer to these geometric disciplines as technologies of perception. Succeeding civilizations around the Mediterranean and Europe have adopted these perceptual practices, and a direct line of transmission links Sumerian land surveying to present-day photography and electronic media.

Within this article, I will describe some of the connections between archaic surveying and modern technology. An important premise of my discussion lies in the nature of automation or, more precisely, the definition of the machine. I mentioned above that preoccupation with cameras can lead to misunderstandings about photography. The photographic camera is a machine for taking pictures, and it thus seems different in kind from any other apparatus, even the camera obscura, which still requires an artist to draw the image. But since a photograph is simply information—the information specific to a visual display—we need to question whether cameras are necessary to produce a photographic "thing," that is, an optically correct image. This is clearly not the case. Renaissance painters and their successors devised accurate methods for producing optically correct images, and their work conditioned the emergence of the camera obscura and photographic machinery.

I submit that the work of perspectival artists—a group that ranges from Donatello to the photorealists—lies between intuition and automation. In other words, perspectival drawing lies between the delicate naturalism of Paleolithic painting and the stark realism of photography. During the Renaissance, the production of art began to be mechanized, and picture making went beyond expression to become media.

The work of Lewis Mumford may clarify my position. In *Technics and Human Civilization*, Mumford introduces the concept of the megamachine, a social machine that coordinates human rather than nonhuman energy. Arising in early civilizations, the megamachine arose when leaders used scientific principles to increase the size, power and precision of work crews. By coordinating human labor with precise measurements and tools, early leaders were able to direct the construction of massive pyramids without the use of engines and other advanced technologies. Unlike many other human endeavors, a primary feature of the megamachine is the dominance of method. Like an inorganic mechanism, workers applied tools of measurement that let them precisely engineer buildings according to plan. Their own judgment was auxiliary to measurements and central direction.

Like earlier surveyors and architects, Renaissance painters allowed scientific principles to determine the structure of their work. Their work was closely allied with engineering and architecture. Optical effects were difficult to realize with medieval tools, so artists quickly adopted more advanced machines to assist their efforts. The requirements of perspective

conditioned the emergence of the camera obscura in the late Renaissance, and the desire of successive generations to fully automate image production led to photography. The process continues today. Electronic processing is dematerializing the camera into the universal machine (and universal medium) of computers. New technologies like digital animation and virtual reality use optical principles, but, like Renaissance painting, they posit the camera as an ideal machine, a perspective that organizes representation according to a coherent point of view.

Photographs function by reproducing the vantage of the eye, and the analogy between eyes and cameras runs deep. As Kuhne first demonstrated, the eye is a camera, and vice versa, and they can sometimes be exchanged. Our understanding of the brain is on the increase; it seems likely that, in the near future, cameras will induce vision through direct neural implants.[4] When fed directly to the brain, media becomes immediate, more like an environment than an overlay. McLuhan's description of an optical-electronic nervous system may have sounded fictional when he uttered it, but it is rapidly becoming true in the fundamental sense, mainly because media now integrates our perceptual apparatus. The convergence of technology with biology continues on the level of image processing. Like human vision, the camera produces internal representations of the world which can be recalled and manipulated. Fidelity is key to photography and natural perception because both are directed toward depicting an environment that must be exploited for navigation, communication and survival. Thus the ontology of the photograph derives from its fundamental utility as a representation of the visual environment—and from the act of vision itself.

Andre Bazin presented one of the first theoretic statements regarding photographic realism in his essay, "What is a Photograph," which appeared in 1937. He attributes a simple realism to the medium, as he opens and shuts the door on a theory of photography.

> Besides, painting is . . . an ersatz of the processes of reproduction. Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it [the object] something more than a mere approximation . . . The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model.[5]

Even as he gives the final word on photography, Bazin indicates that cinema is a much richer field for theory, closing with, "On the other hand, cinema is also a language." Bazin subsequently founded the field of cinema studies, and for decades scholars had little to say about photography. In the late 1950s, Roland Barthes discussed photographs, taking a linguistic approach adopted in the 1970s by a coterie that included Alan Sekula, Victor Burgin and Judith Williamson. Since then a field of critical photographic studies has emerged to analyze the various uses of photography in propaganda, advertising, surveillance and personal life.

Though placed in a multitude of disciplines, most studies of photography are either sociological, seeking a language of photography within its human elements, or phenomenological, attending to the mysteries of perception at a distance. Some claim that perspective is simply a Western convention for representation, though such arguments are difficult to maintain against optics. The dawn of the digital era has added a twist to writing on photography, giving a new generation of scholars the opportunity to decry a post-objective era.

Current scholarship on photography is fragmented because it possesses no disciplinary paradigm. Beyond an unproductive dichotomy between realism and conventionalism, and an often-blurry technical history, we have no concrete understanding of how photography emerged, let alone how it engages the social mechanism. What forces gave impulse to the camera and its trajectory of development? While Bazin painfully emphasizes the objective realism of photography, and derails further study, he points to a generative function within the medium. The photographic image is not just an ersatz representation. It reproduces the environment, the thing itself, and becomes an ideal (or virtual) reality for the viewer. Bazin introduces photography with a discussion of cave paintings and Egyptian mummification. These practices, he claims, reveal the primal motives of artistic representation. He justifies this strange comparison by claiming our ancestors sought to overcome space and time by preserving appearances. In other words, to control life by constructing an idealized, artificial environment. Though concerned at this point with the plastic arts, from an historical perspective Bazin has approached the crux of photography and the technologies supporting it. While the comparison of mummies to photographs may stretch our powers of analysis, we can find other representational practices in ancient cultures which do not.

Land surveying has been a profession for over six thousand years. First invented in Sumer and spreading quickly to Egypt, it emerged as one of the essential technologies of civilization, and it underlies virtually every advance in urban culture, technical representation and mass communication. It is a critical form of organized perception, but its contributions to society are often overlooked. Neither cities nor social hierarchies could exist without surveyors and the property boundaries they create. Estates, buildings, roads, and aqueducts all depend on the related acts of surveying, planning and impressing new designs into the earth.

Bazin described mummification as a primal impulse behind photography, but study of surveying provides far more insight. Beyond the fact that optics derived from geometric investigation, surveying also plays the preservative role described by Bazin. Since ancient times surveyors have preserved the state and its social organization by defining property boundaries. Herodotus's description of ancient Egyptian land surveyors is no less apt today.

> For this cause Egypt was intersected. The king moreover (so they said) divided

> the country among all the Egyptians by giving each an equal square parcel of land, and made this his source of revenue, appointing the payment of a yearly tax. And any man who was robbed by the river of a part of his land would come to Sesostris and declare what had befallen him; then the king would send men to look into it and measure the space by which the land was divided, so that thereafter it should pay in proportion to the tax originally imposed. From this, to my thinking, the Greeks originally learnt the art of measuring land.

Like photography, surveying was invented to extend perceptual powers. Urban planners could not comprehend the expanses necessary to build cities and empires, and surveying was the first in a long series of perceptual technologies invented to create objective, accurate images of the environment. It functioned as the eyes and visual memory of the early megamachine, a state bureaucracy that created specialized labor and social hierarchy. In contrast to cave paintings or mummification, the goal of surveying and related practices is to inform, not to express aesthetic or ritual values. At the core of a survey map is data, a representation of visual space which conveys useful information.

We should keep in mind that visual representations are not necessarily pictorial. Archaic survey records, or cadastres, do not contain visual representations; they are nothing more than tables of measurements which, if associated with a particular area, describe a plot of land. In form and content they resemble digital databases which exist for the same purpose. However, by 2300 BCE an interesting parallel to the evolution of digital computing occurs in Mesopotamia. Cadastres had been growing in both size and detail since their invention in the fourth millennium, and an unknown surveyor in the service of the great UR III bureaucracy introduced an innovative means to displaying geometric data: a graphic interface. We would now call this device a map.[6] Survey maps developed rapidly within Mesopotamia, becoming a means to manipulate land through urban planning. Maps were used to manage estates, design buildings and govern cities. (See Figure 4) Much like the modern GUI, the cadastral map appealed to the innate capacities of human vision. While tables continued to exist, then as now, the map was a preferred means of displaying complex environmental data in some situations.

Figure 4: An UR III Empire survey map, dating from approximately 2300 BCE (Nissen, 1993)

Another telling parallel exists between archaic and contemporary civilizations. When placed alongside an early cadastral map, an aerial photograph reveals the origins and purpose of our quintessentially modern art. (See Figure 5) Both present an expanse of land, and both achieve geometric accuracy by assuming an ideal aerial perspective. More importantly, both are directed at the same purpose: the comprehension and management of productive earth. Despite the distance of time, the Mesopotamian scribes who staffed the first bureaucracies would have understood the function and purpose of our late model GIS computers, the Geographic Information Systems that overlay representations of land with useful information about productivity, access and ownership.[7] (See Figure 6)

Figure 5: An aerial photograph (*Space Imaging EOSAT Notes*, 1997)

Bazin's recognition that the photograph is a model for reality, as well as an objective reality in its own right, aim at the core of photography and related practices. We often think of perception, visual or otherwise, as passive, oriented only toward accurate representation. Photography has often been treated in a similar manner, as a wax tablet supplying "truth at twenty-four times a second" but little more. But the ontology of truth tells only half the story. In practice neither vision nor photography has ever

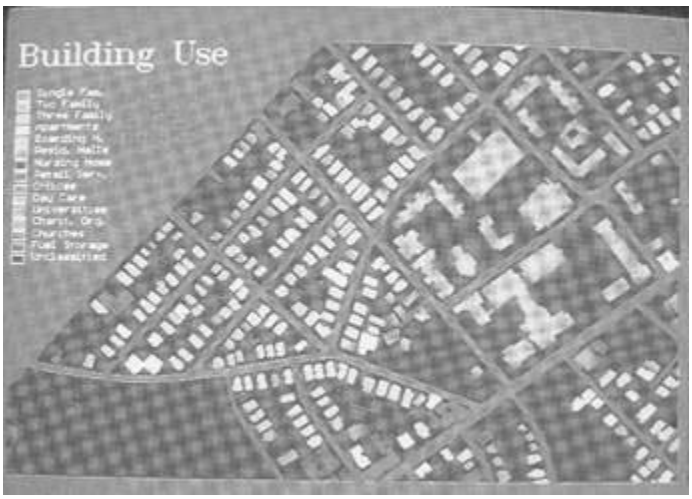

Figure 6: *A GIS display*

Like the earliest survey maps, Geographic Information Systems display an image of terrain overlaid with information such as ownership, usage, disposition of the soil. (Antenucci, 1991)

been passive. Each supplies information as a means to action, and, like the related practices of surveying and architecture, each provides a medium for the redesign of the environment. Like life, which sustains its own biosphere, humanity generates a milieu friendly to its needs. Vision, architecture and the intermediate technologies of photography, surveying and planning are the means to creating a genuinely human environment.

The Idiot King

Surveying emerged with the early city-state, and it has served the cause of urban civilization ever since. The ancients did not have distinct concepts of technology, science and politics, but their ideologies, which are religious in nature, still reveal the essential relationships between their disciplines. Prior to urbanization, Mesopotamians adhered to animistic beliefs similar to those of contemporary tribes. After the advent of cities, they developed state ideologies based on the sovereignty of sky gods like Inanna and Ningursu. Divine sanction conferred legitimacy upon rulers, and worship occupied most ceremonies of state. Sky gods were associated with planets—Inanna rose with Venus—and their celestial vantage revealed their transcendent authority. Hovering over their lands, they were the lords of all they saw, and their followers built ziggurats as aerial vantages for divine supervision. Mesopotamian hymns capture the awe, and lack of privacy, early civilization felt before these symbols:

> It [the temple Eninnu] kept an eye on the country;
> no arrogant one could walk
> in its sight.
> awe of Eninnu
> covered all lands like a cloth.8
>
> Toward [the temple] Shugalam, dread place
> the place from where [the god] Ningursu
> keeps an eye on all lands . . .
> Thrust against heaven
> is its dread halo,
> and over all lands hovers
> great awe of my house9

The urban state has unfolded from the concept of the sky god, idealized as a tyrant who governs the earthly state through all-encompassing vision. Aerial perspective—conceived as a divine seat, but realized as the technology of surveying—was a key advance in the feasibility of

state institutions.

Surveying realizes the perspective of the Inanna and her ilk, and architecture embodies their creative will, which depended on their ability to view land from an objective vantage. From its first appearance in land surveying, the organization of vision has driven the development of optics, and the drive to merge individual and collective perception continues. Architecture and media both derive from the objective gaze, and the modern spy satellite, surveying the masses below, is its virtual embodiment. In non-political terms, we could say that photography arose from a concern with method. What is the proper way to represent the environment? Whether manifest in Sumerian surveying, Renaissance painting or aerial surveillance, this question bears on the aesthetic, political and scientific concerns surrounding perceptual technologies. Though technical in nature, it is wrapped in the institutions of power—property and architecture—that caused it to emerge.

How do we define property as a practical concept? Sumerian religion provided the first transactive language, or code, for comprehending land in terms of legal ownership. Pre-urban societies assign landholdings according to organic need, and the size of plots are naturally limited by the ability of owners to manage an area. Sky gods owned the land beneath their gaze, and they conveyed ownership to select classes within society as a legal right. By underpinning the legal doctrine of ownership, the sky god constituted the state and simultaneously posed a perceptual problem to its adherents. Ownership demanded management, but Mesopotamian leaders could only comprehend small areas with their native faculties—an area big enough to feed themselves and their families. In order to govern larger areas, they needed to attain the perspective of the sky god. Land surveying solved their problem. By combining simple surveying techniques with advances in accounting, early managers could remotely manage their estates, an ability which greatly extended their capacity to rule. The priests of Mesopotamia used geometry to attain the vision of gods.

In contemporary terms, we might call this action at a distance telepresence or virtual experience. The key to understanding why these terms apply lies in our definition of reality. If “real” means a visually correct image of a distant place, then they are certainly inappropriate. But if “real” describes an accurate representation, then a bureaucrat reviewing survey maps surely has experienced a distant place in a meaningful way. Mathematical knowledge lies at the basis of perceptual technology, and the data generated by technology is independent of a particular display. We admire photographs for their resemblance to vision, but both photography and vision operate by decomposing a visual scene into components. We can hardly say that photographs carried within television signals, or a computers, have lost their identity. They have simply changed mode, a process that occurs when our brains translate retinal images into neural impulses.

Geometry derived from conscious reflection on material practices. As a cognitive process, it is related to our ability to communicate and coordinate the self within society. Despite our singular feelings of value, self-awareness may have evolved as an outgrowth of language, perhaps simply to facilitate cooperation. But this does not mean consciousness is merely the

capacity for symbolizing. Thought lacks direct instrumentality, arising as it does from the unique situation of the body in its environment. It is the awakening of symbol to itself, the realization of the capacity to communicate through structured discourse. Through its embodiment, its placement in a desiring body, consciousness projects thought onto its environment, understanding its surroundings through stories that reflect its awareness of self, situation and desire. Aside from sheer presence, which demands acknowledgment, the gap between situation and desire, between the real and the ideal, is the primary motive for conscious beings to communicate. We imagine a better situation, and then, with the aid of others, try to realize it. Individual desire calls society and its tools for communication into being.

Millennia of social development preceded the relatively quick formation of the first city-states in Mesopotamia. It is not a given that archaic Mesopotamians were evolving toward urban civilization. Instead it seems likely that they confronted conditions such as drought which forced them into progressively smaller regions. Necessity demanded they create efficient organizations of production and distribution, and bureaucracy emerged to handle the administrative load. Sky gods emerged to consolidate Mesopotamian society within state institutions, and, though our society is more sophisticated, we are still realizing the consequences of Sumerian ideology.

Ancient priests may have conceived social hierarchy, private property and land surveying as a religious exercise, but their practical intent was the maintenance of cities. These institutions have persisted until today, gaining in variety and complexity, but never losing the ideal form of legal sovereignty and unchallenged will. To be effective, Sumerian religion absorbed the natural sovereignty of individuals, who gradually became subjects of the state and its dictates. By appropriating taxes and labor, the state constituted itself as a corporate regime defined by the active surveillance of territory. The image of the sky god gained force over time, and it eventually entered the divinely ordained king whose will embodied the political state.

Though symbolically concentrated in his body, the king could hardly manage every facet of daily administration. As a practical matter, the royal will and its divine legitimacy was dispersed among a hierarchy of officials. In many modern states, every individual bears some degree of legal sovereignty, though their liberty is constrained by law. In all states, property ownership is a key signifier of status, and it became the basis for the division of physical and cognitive labor. Property constituted the *res publica* by situating individuals within abstract mechanisms of hierarchy, land rights and surplus value. On this basis, the state and its institutions could organize themselves as virtual bodies, performing their duties in urban interiors according to rational divisions of labor. Surveying and bookkeeping documents mediated communication within states, sending information from the peripheries and directives from the center. As Herodotus notes, records migrated toward central locations, archives that contained virtual images of land. Maps, calendars and accounting tables became essential tools within complex civil societies, serving as percepts that greatly expanded the faculties of their users. Mediated by tablets, papyrus and pens, and transported throughout the nation, these representations became a sensory apparatus, one that supported the state

through disciplined perceptions.

Early technologies like surveying clarify the essence of later practices like photography, mass media and digital imagery. For centuries the Mesopotamians did not distinguish the representation of land from other forms of information. Aside from its tools of measure, geometry was not treated as a special discipline, and cadastres contained only written measurements accompanied by descriptions of location. Later sketches displayed the same prosaic attitude, although it was no doubt difficult, if not impossible, to achieve visual effects on a clay tablet. But the first maps nonetheless transformed raw information into something resembling vision, and they inspired a transformation of the way we understand our visual environment.

The transformation accelerated when the sciences of Mesopotamia and Egypt passed into Greece. A critical attitude evolved within Greek science, perhaps because thinkers tried to reconcile alternative systems. By the sixth century BCE, Greek artists began to display a concern with realism, and we see the beginning of furious philosophic debates over proper representation. Investigations into visual truth began emanating from workshops and academies, and over centuries painters adapted the techniques of perspective, laying the foundation for optical science. Greek investigations into scientific representation culminated in Euclid's *Geometry* and *Optics*, which were completed in the third century BCE.

Among their many accomplishments, Euclid's mathematical studies reconcile the dualism that plagued Platonic philosophy. Plato denigrated perception because the shifting appearances of things contradicted what we know. In mathematical terms, geometry describes what we know, and optics describes how we see. By deriving optics from geometry, Euclid demonstrated the validity of visual information. Vision distorts geometric space—it distorts reality—but it does so systematically. As any surveyor knows, by accounting for the effects of perspective, we can glean accurate data about visual objects. The obvious solution to Plato's dilemma is to systematically relate optical "slices," individual perspectives, to a coordinated, geometric whole.

Thinkers from Claudius Ptolemy[10] to Rudolph Arnheim[11] have proposed something like Euclid's schema, and Stephen Kosslyn's work *Image and Brain* extends that work to the imagination. When we remember a visual image, the visual cortex hosts an event physiologically similar to actual perception. We may recall James Gibson's arguments against mental imagery, but Kosslyn presents convincing experimental evidence for pictorialism and the matter should be closed.[12] However, we can still query the human visual system, questioning why it evolved as it did. Could we have evolved a "sightless vision," the cybernetic vision Paul Virilio describes in *The Vision Machine*? We sometimes perceive without sensation, as when we automatically block a stray ball. There are alternative forms of visual perception that do not rely in internal representation, for instance, in computers that use neural nets for navigation. The human brain is often described as a neural net. Could consciousness have evolved differently? What role does preconscious processing play in our responses? How does vision relate to faculties like language.

Visualization became important when Paleolithic toolmakers began working together. Unlike most animals, humans have few inborn skills, so their survival depends on creativity and learning. Even when chipping rudimentary knives, early humans needed mental conceptions, and probably verbal descriptions, to guide their activities. Speech and imagination sufficed to organize society until the advent of city-states, when large projects demanded precise and durable forms of visualization. Thousands of workers often contributed to a project, and monumental works could not be built without coordinating (and subordinating) their judgment. Leaders needed objective standards to manage projects, and they invented the disciplines of measurement and quantitative analysis. Perceptual technologies coordinated the social body, allowing large groups to behave as one. While planning scribes would gather physical data such as size, weight and volume. They would then devise schedules by analyzing productivity, available labor and other factors. Deployed within a social body, geometric representation formed a matrix of objective perception, and the mechanical accuracy of surveyors enabled the functioning of social technics, the megamachine described by Mumford.

> *And what of our human art? Must we not say in building it produces an actual house, and in painting a house of a different sort, as it were a man-made dream for waking eyes?*
>
> Plato, “The Sophist”

I have described perceptual technologies as activities that coordinate an autonomous social body. But, from the individual standpoint, the products of surveying and related technologies create far more than external pictures. They constitute institutions, and they structure society by defining relations of property, administration and commerce. Unlike natural vision, which views the environment as a continuum, perceptual technologies couple attention to social boundaries consisting of laws, architecture, contracts, receipts and deadlines. By organizing perception into an objective whole, they create a secondary environment based on institutional rather than individual imperatives. Property lines, buildings, calendars—none of these are pregiven in experience. They are human creations that reenact nature.

Subjectivity and objectivity take on new meanings in this context. Like geometry and optics, they refer to strategies of political organization, not scientific truths. Taking the state as an analytic condition, we might speculate on the next stage of perceptual technology. Surveying produced perspective, which in turn led to photography and television. Engineers are already producing immersive digital environments, some of which may do away with cameras and material displays. Direct neural couplings will be widely available in the foreseeable future. Scientists have already bypassed eyes and ears, and advanced haptic interfaces could simulate the balance of senses. There is no reason to feed real-world camera images into a neural coupling—digital environments would work just as well. Artists and engineers have already started designing imaginary spaces, giving us a taste of possible future environments. (See Figure 7) In a stable virtual world, neurally induced experiences could collapse the opposition between subject and object, along with distinctions among vision, photography and architecture. As our senses adapted to the new environment, culture might evade nature

altogether, referring only to itself. What sort of societies might evolve in such a space?

Figure 7: *A Virtual Space*

Designed by the NOX studio in Rotterdam, this virtual space is accessed through head mounted goggles. Within a few years, the environment may be accessed through direct neural coupling between the brain and the computer which generates it. (Zellner, 1999)

Strict control of virtual worlds could create a kind of planetary dungeon. Economics would dictate the rhythm of daily life, which would be governed by a central body according to laws of consumption and production. Freedom could be severely curtailed in this environment, which might resemble a digital version of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. Proposed in the eighteenth century, the panopticon was designed as an ideal prison which concealed nothing from the guards. Misbehavior was unlikely in such a place. More advanced technologies are beginning to impose a similar effect on society at large. Surveillance cameras blanket most cities, and authorities are using computer networks to increase their effectiveness. Complemented by satellite-based surveillance, an immersive cyberspace could completely assimilate individual faculties to objective data. Privacy would be impossible since every perception would be controlled, even witnessed. Videotapes in arcade games capture the completeness of digital surveillance. People can either join the game, or they can observe it from the perspective of one or more players.

On the other hand, these same technologies could celebrate an extreme form of individuality. A wave of progress in genetics and engineering could take humanity well beyond its current state, and, driven by the urge for self-fulfillment, an elite, or perhaps an entire society, might decide to fuse with machines and retreat into cyberspace. Here they would develop a poetics of technology, crafting experience with unlimited mental resources.13 Freed from productive labor, these cyborgs might reject the objective order altogether. Imagination would become the organizing principle of experience. (See Figure 8) It may be difficult to sustain a collective under such conditions, particularly if companionship could be provided by one's own creations. Unchecked individualism could break down society, creating a future bizarrely reminiscent of myth. Living in a programmed environment, bodies and the world could assume any shape, support any whimsy. Computers would then plunge individuals into a kind of idiocy—immersed in technology they would be playmates who met only for companionship. Or who never met at all. Confined to their individual worlds, each person would exist as a mechanical god, an idiot

king presiding over a terrain of information.

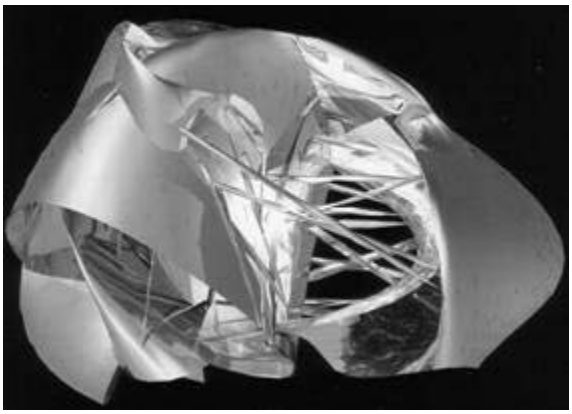

Figure 8: *Architecture of the Future*

Marcos Novak designs virtual environments according to poetics rather than gravity. Unencumbered by mass and utility, they function as fantastic playgrounds for the mind. (Zellner, 1999)

The scenarios outlined above describe the polar tendencies toward freedom and tyranny inherent within perceptual technologies, the machines we use for observation and communication. As a concept, the sky god displays both tendencies, and, when applied within society as an ideology, it creates the primal existential dilemma. What is the role of the individual within society? The previous scenarios represent extreme possibilities in the development of media, and we can hope that society evolves within their balance. It is hard to predict what scenario may come to pass. Biotechnology is advancing more quickly than we would have imagined even ten years ago, and engineers are busy devising new ways to reconstruct our senses. Already we largely dwell within a virtual reality, an artificial world enclosed by architecture, media and telecommunication. But we may never build a completely cybernetic world, preferring to simply augment natural perception with layers of information.

The sky god can model transcendent freedom, or it can subsume the individual to a corporate will. We see within it the modern individual who uses machines to control destiny. In the beginning this power was wielded only by kings, but, since the beginning of urbanization, more and more individuals have gained the power to structure their world. Personal liberty has never been greater except perhaps in certain tribal cultures. At the same time, the ability of central authorities to control expression, movement and now biology has advanced immeasurably, and we always stand on the brink of totalitarianism. Whether concrete or digital, our cities embody the creative gaze and the architectural will of the sky gods. Though our kings have lost divine right, we have launched the sky god into orbit, just as the Sumerians conceived. The constant presence of surveillance cameras, whether hanging from buildings or satellites, should remind us of the potency of such vision, and how it might alter our environment. However it evolves, virtual reality will bear the imprint, and the dangers, of the ideal state and the vision of the gods.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Douglas Kellner of UCLA, Robert Solomon of University of Texas at Austin and Steve Best of the University of Texas at El Paso for their comments and encouragement.

Notes

1 Sabra, A. I. (1989) *Ibn al-Haytham’s Optics*. London: The Warburg Institute.

2 This important episode on the history of optics has often been misconstrued by modern commentators, for example, in *Techniques of the Observer* (Crary, 1990: 27, 35, 38). In support of his statements, Crary cites David Lindberg. Crary seems to have missed the conclusion of Lindberg’s argument. At one point, Lindberg states that Kepler was familiar with the argument that an earlier attempt to construe the eye as a camera obscura. But on the next page, the comparison capitulates to a powerful counter-argument (Lindberg 1976: 182-206). Other inaccuracies in Crary’s work include the surprising assertion that Euclid and Aristotle were familiar with the pinhole effect (Crary, 1990: 27).

3 Wald, George (1953) ‘Eye and Camera’ in *Scientific American Reader*. NY: Simon & Schuster: pp. 555-68.

4 Research in this area has made great strides. Scientists at both the University of North Carolina and MIT have developed retinal implants that carry impulses from a camera directly to the optic nerve, temporarily giving limited vision to blind people. Reports are available in the websites of their respective universities.

5 Bazin, Andre (1967) “Ontology of the Photograph” in Trachtenberg, Alan, (ed.) *Classic Essays on Photography*. New Haven, CN: Lee’s Island Books: pp. 237-245.

6 Stephens, Ferris. J. (1953) “A Surveyor’s Map of a Field.” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 7 (1) 1953 and Nissen, Hans (1993), Robert K. Englund and Peter Damerow. *Archaic Bookkeeping*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

7 Antenucci, John (1991) with Kay Brown, Peter Croswell and Michael Kevany. *Geographic Information Systems: An Introduction to the Technology*. New York: Van Nostrand Rheinhold.

8 Jakobsen, Thorkild (1987) *The Harp that Once . . .* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p 422.

9 Ibid., pp. 398-400.

10 Ptolemy, Claudius. *The Geography*. New York: Dover Publications, 1991.

11 Arnheim, Rudolph (1969) *Visual Thinking*. Berkely, CA: 1969.

12 UCLA neurosurgeon Itzhak Fried and a team of researchers reported in *Nature* that the mind's eye—the imagination or mental view—generates mental pictures by using the same neurons that were activated when it saw the object or image. "Our study reveals that the same brain cells that fire when a person looks at a picture of the Mona Lisa are, in fact, the same neurons that excite when that person is asked to imagine the Mona Lisa." (Fried, 2000)

13 Zellner, Peter (1999) *Hybrid Space: New Forms on Digital Architecture*. New York.

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Two Poems

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

WCW BLUES

Sexual lust may weaken me
but I've always come back
to my senses
Sweet Free Emotion
no one is corny
here Sister, Brother

It permeates!
It melds and it
coats and immerses
It entwines
and conceives
It is gestating
It is birthing!
It's composing
It's decomposing
It has become
One with
the language!

Young I felt
I felt It
I felt young
With the super special
extra souled tenacity
of beneficial madmen
That It, Yes It
would come easy
easy as sunrise
We're not just talking
blessed by the Muse
here
We're talking
All Out
Eternal Verse
We're talking

The Best
The Best Ever

I didn’t want to quit
my day job
for a literary prize
at South Sophomore State
nor a token wild man be
at the Festival of Squares

When I wrote tragedy
It was earth shaking
It was Epic
You may have seen an oafish pretentious
unlearned freak
a trouble maker
A bombed comedian
a no literary value boor
with severe problems

Last night I tried to take a bottle of Rum
to the Clear Light
I am no longer possessed of an extra soul
Those tragedies and lonelinesses I romanticized

are real and pathetic
The entire reason I deal with the outward show
this Maya this supposed life
in front of me
The melodrama of art
The death in life
The purpose and cause
Is aching like a mother fucker

Now I know they really were against us
They had scorn and repugnance for the poor
They didn’t want their literature
open to the creole cultures
the underground metaphor
They really didn’t want the lower classes
to rise
Okay cartoonize, abstract, or use us
rise as an individual maybe
but as a class never

This must be the working class writer blues
This must be the working class blues
This must the working class
This must be the blues

INSIDE OTISVILLE

First in-class writing
at the correctional facility
(State Prison)

I see 11 men— 11 good men
How do I know they're good?
How does anyone know—
I see the concertina wire, its cutting music
I can't hear, only see
I see the mind of a heart
jump out of a hand
the dream not deferred
but exploding
a load lightened by a gram
an ounce a mote a speck
and the heavy load is carried by
a body that is not mine
any longer
a ghost carrying a cross

I dream refrigerators and big deep couches
and free dentists and the time I'll be home
and her arms
I will not share— but somehow
that embrace that breath
living inside the breath
It will survive and enter the waters

I see the faces I've seen in the bars
the off track betting parlors
and littered parks, that I've seen
down in the rust and black smoke
down in the alligator warehouses
up again on that gold dust sidewalk
in the car next to me entering the Mid
Town Tunnel selling flowers, papers
at the Tri-Boro toll booth

The face on the working streets of South Ozone Park
that catch my eyes and turn away as do mine
I see a little stream of light with floating lint butterflies
and milky ways of insect fragments
A woman's face in a piece of bread
a dead man's last words in the grain
of the sidewalks
the grey and the dull
institutional green

What does that mean?
What is a mistake that is paid for?
What is the price society has set?
I'm not society—I don't even like society
I want to live in the Future
freedom is another chance
freedom is a big black bird
over the rooftops
undaunted by the smoky grim spume
of strange industry
Evil is not human
Let me 12 years old again be
and I'll show you a different world
destiny
Let me live That
I would give you how the moon
is high
How it is free to do whatever it wants
and the only sounds are
water air insects wind
the weeping leaves of grass
the laughing of machineless nights
A festival of sleep walking
a dream not a dream

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The Other Side

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

At first only a few of us noticed, and we didn't talk about it until later—though most of us probably tried to check with someone early on. I know I did. Putting it as a matter of curiosity, in passing, but seriously, the way you might ask "Have you ever had a dream where you dreamed you woke up?" But of course, in that case, a lot of people say yes, and the others at least know what you mean.

All in all, it seemed like a good idea just to move on. Everything else was okay. Well, nothing was actually okay, because it was happening to everything, but nothing *else* was happening to anything, that's the point. So you could adjust. I mean, if one day you woke up and everything in the world was yellow, it would definitely be weird. But after awhile you might be able to just say "Hey, one-color world," and go about your business. But that comparison doesn't really work because there would be major confusion in some areas, like recognizing beverages, if everything was yellow. Anyway, in the actual case, most of us made the adjustment and moved on.

Except that, after awhile, it got more—pronounced, would be a good word. At first, you were only glimpsing the edges of the other side of things. And even those were in hazy outline, like a degraded holograph. So you weren't 100% sure that you hadn't been seeing them all along, but just hadn't noticed. Sort of like, when you feel a slight pain or ache, you sometimes think that maybe it has been with you for some time after all. Or as if you realized, through some accidental circumstance, that your peripheral vision was broader than you had realized up until now. Only, of course, *your* periphery wasn't the issue in this case.

So you could still tell jokes and enjoy life for a certain time, even as it became definite that your view of the other side of things was extending further and getting more solid. Color and texture, and so on. Some people stuck it out longer than others, though. Because it did get harder to cope.

In the early days, I went to a lot of movies. So did other people, I noticed. It was because things in the movies don't have any thickness to see around. So everything in the movies stayed normal, or as normal as things in the movies ever were. So it was quite a relief to go to the movies.

But later on, as the whole process advanced, and people were starting to lose it publicly and you really had to suck it up and hang tough just to navigate, I stopped going to the movies. It was too heartbreaking, the discrepancy. For me it was. When you went outside afterwards there was just no ignoring how drastic the change was. You couldn't help but notice that you were seeing a *lot* of the other side of everything. The disparity was so stark. For me anyway, the movies caused this intense longing for the simpler times I had taken for granted, so I

stopped going.

But plenty of people reacted the opposite. They went more and more often. They went from one stall in the multiplex to the other to the other. If they could afford it. The movie theater people began to make sure that people bought another ticket each time, though. But they also began to stay open 24 hours, which was good for people who could afford it. And they built more of them too.

Other people stayed in their rooms a lot, in the dark with the TV or the VCR. After a certain point, the TV—the live TV—got really strange, though. There had obviously been some policy decision, and live TV people continued to pretend that nothing had changed. It got more and more obvious that they were pretending. You could see them trying not to look at things around them on the set. And they began to stare at their own monitors much more, to communicate with each other through the screens on the set much more. You could see that it was getting to be a struggle for them too. Not good to watch. Not helpful.

But just the VCR could be really good. If you had just the VCR on, and the rest of the room was dark, it was almost completely okay. You knew where stuff was, just being guided by shadowy shapes was enough, and everything *felt* the same, so you could really be almost completely normal in a darkly shadowed room. That's why so many people just went ahead and put out their eyes in the later stages. Many did it in groups. They ritualized it and, afterwards, when they were all together, touching in the dark, they could really say good-bye. Except that some of those groups went into panic, so that was a gamble too. Any way you chose was going to be a gamble.

It wasn't transparency, that's the what you think when it's first described, that things are going transparent, starting at the edges and then spreading further around. That wouldn't have been a comfortable experience either, of course, but at least it's conceivable. I remember once, when things were pretty well advanced but not up to any major threshold, some of us were starting to form groups, and we were talking to this woman who was still insisting that she didn't notice anything specific, just a mood of disorientation. A lot of people went through a long stage of that, by the way. Something like that famous psychology experiment where you give people playing cards that are normal except the hearts are colored black and the clubs are colored red. People just go ahead and play poker or canasta or whatever, apparently without noticing. But their blood pressure and galvanic skin responses go haywire, and they get irritable and anxious and they want to stop playing all the time, but they never realize why. Sort of like that, except of course, you couldn't stop playing in this case.

Anyway, about this woman, I'm pretty sure she was just in denial. Her body language had that wound-up stretching quality and her eyes tended to rest at unlikely angles on the sky or some other blank expanse. When she had to deal directly with your face or with some object, her eyes had that stare-right-past-it look that allowed you to see something just enough to be able to use it without acknowledging it particularly. But I couldn't be sure, of course; you couldn't see what other people were seeing, so you could never be sure. Anyway, we were trying to

describe it to her and she seemed to be trying to understand. She kept saying things like “You mean things are getting thinner and you can see through them?”

She was trying to strike a bargain. If we would accept her description, she might be willing to admit the whole business. Otherwise, she wasn’t going to see it. But our group was committed. We were not one of the soft groups. That’s not it, we said, you just see around, you see the other side. But that’s impossible, she kept saying, my eyes are on this side. That was the big item for her, her own eyes—her outlook, so to speak. Sometimes she would touch her eyes. People like her didn’t last.

But transparent things were good to look at, by the way. At least at first they were. Especially if whatever was around you wasn’t distinct from other things around you. Like in a room with the same wall paper all over, or sitting in the bushes. Then you could see the beginnings of the other side of the transparent thing—say a glass ball—but what you saw through it wasn’t that different from what you saw through your side, so the overall experience was pretty normal. When things got more advanced, though, you didn’t ever want to look at a transparent thing, of course. Or mirrors.

Rushing water, say in fountains or waterfalls, was good too. Also fire. Seeing the other side of them was like seeing more of the same. But *more.* That feeling you used to get in normal times, watching a stream or campfire—the same feeling, but richer. That kind of thing became a point of pride for the hard groups. Others might gather under some phony explanation, but, in the hard groups, you were expected to meet it straight on and even revel in it. It was this feeling that, if you could just ride it, go with it—then you would reap some reward. And also the feeling that it didn’t matter what you did anyway, so you might as well enjoy it for as long as you could. You can see the macho-masochism potential. The ultimate analogy would be jumping off a really tall building and deciding to enjoy the fall.

So when we discovered intense experience enhancements, like rushing water or fires, we spent hours extolling the sensations and our own daring. Actually, I didn’t last with my hard group past a certain point. It got too forced. But it was a brave choice, you have to admit that.

Another good thing was to be in the desert or by the ocean. Wide open spaces, in other words. If you looked into the distance and not at your immediate surroundings, well, the effect of expansion and release that you got in normal times had only been a muffled intimation. Large objects in the distance, mountains, say, and, most of all, the horizon itself on a clear day, the folding over and around of one’s vision on so grand a scale—it was like a dream of flying, soaring, but you were a great flock.

So a lot of people gathered on beaches and deserts. When these places started to jam up, of course it defeated the purpose. There were crowd control problems, sanitation and so on—so that whole movement didn’t last long. Some people just went out in boats, just went out to sea with supplies. I don’t know how it went for them in the later stages.

And, yes, night got to be very welcome. That became when most people went out and mingled

and did their errands. Of course, there had always been a welcome kind of night, the kind that comes after a really oppressive hot day, with gentle breezes stirring the trees in the dark around you when you step outside. Night in general got to be more like that. The dawn got to be what you dreaded. On some level, you kept expecting things to be alright again when you woke up. But they never were. That was bad.

In the last stages, the only way you knew the difference between your side and the other side of anything was through your body habits. If you let it alone, your body knew what it would feel if you touched a thing—for example, that you would get a grip on the handle if you reached for the cup this way or that. But you had to take it for granted. That's what I learned the hard way from being with someone when he started to touch things just for the reassurance. Once he began to do that, he got into this guessing game with himself about which side was facing his body and very quickly lost his ability to distinguish between the sides. In one afternoon, actually. I tried to distract him when I realized what was happening, but he was locked in by then. He would guess right a few times, and the relief would start to flow, and the desire for more relief would drive him to another flurry of touching, at which point, of course, he would miss a few and the fear would come back in that "Oh, god, please, not again" way that can be so wearing—and back he would go to testing, lining things up one by one after he had figured out with his hands which side was which, trying to memorize for each thing which side was which so that maybe he could *learn* how to tell the difference again. Impossible to do it that way, of course. It was a knack.

When he started trying to get me to help him figure it out, I had to cut him loose. There was no way I could risk it. But that's how I learned the importance of taking it for granted in my actions that I knew which side was which.

Connected with this was not looking at any part of your own body—obviously never in a mirror, but also not in the course of your routine activities. The key parts to avoid were your hands and forearms, above all, but also your feet and legs if you had to look down for some reason. Luckily, this requirement dovetailed with learning how use your eyes in a general way to supervise overall performance, locating things, selecting what to reach for and so on, and then letting your hands do the detail work. So you would need to be letting your body habits determine which side of a thing you were on at exactly the very instant when you needed to turn your eyes away so as not to see your own limbs. You got in this groove of looking away just as you reached out or stepped down or whatever it was. That coincidence of requirements was really what made it possible to continue functioning in the later stages.

Touching your own body parts, on the other hand, as opposed to looking at them, was probably the most grounding thing you could do. Touching anything was good, of course. That quickly became the source of your moment-to-moment faith. If you had ever wondered how blind people could possibly "read" those little Braille dots in the elevator, you didn't wonder anymore! Stroking and holding things in public was acceptable right from the beginning. You could continue to conduct normal transactions with someone who was doing that—it didn't really disrupt the interaction any more than if they had an unusual haircut, say, or an

especially striking fashion accessory. But touching your own body parts was different because it wasn't so easy to overlook in social situations, so for a long time people mostly did that in private or at least in the dark. Then it became okay to do in crowds, because of the anonymity. In the end, it didn't matter any more and people did whatever they needed to do.

Of course, if you were just rubbing your hands together or stroking your arms or keeping them folded snugly, that was okay anywhere right from the beginning. It just got more common. What wasn't publicly acceptable for a long time was feeling slowly all over and around as far as possible, the way people learned to do almost by instinct, feeling not just with your hands but with your arms, and especially all over your face and head, and your legs and feet feeling each other, and also pressing your back, your spine, really hard against something solid. Your spine became very important.

Reciprocal touching in social situations, handshaking and so on, that ended quickly. It led to clinging and violence. Besides, there were pairs and groups forming everywhere for all that. Almost everyone who lasted gravitated into the touching groups during the last stages. But, though comforting, such groups were risky, subject to obsessive pacts or outbursts of impulse that couldn't be contained. The most durable groups prohibited both looking and touching, relying instead on conversation—and, of course, the singing. They stayed together and found some peace, right up to the end. I was in one of those groups, thank God. It just worked out that way, by accidental encounter. We gave ourselves in gratitude to music, and to words, which took no sides. We dwelt together in our voices and the stories that we told, stories of our world remembered. There were many beautiful moments.

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* *With acknowledgements to Edmund Husserl.*

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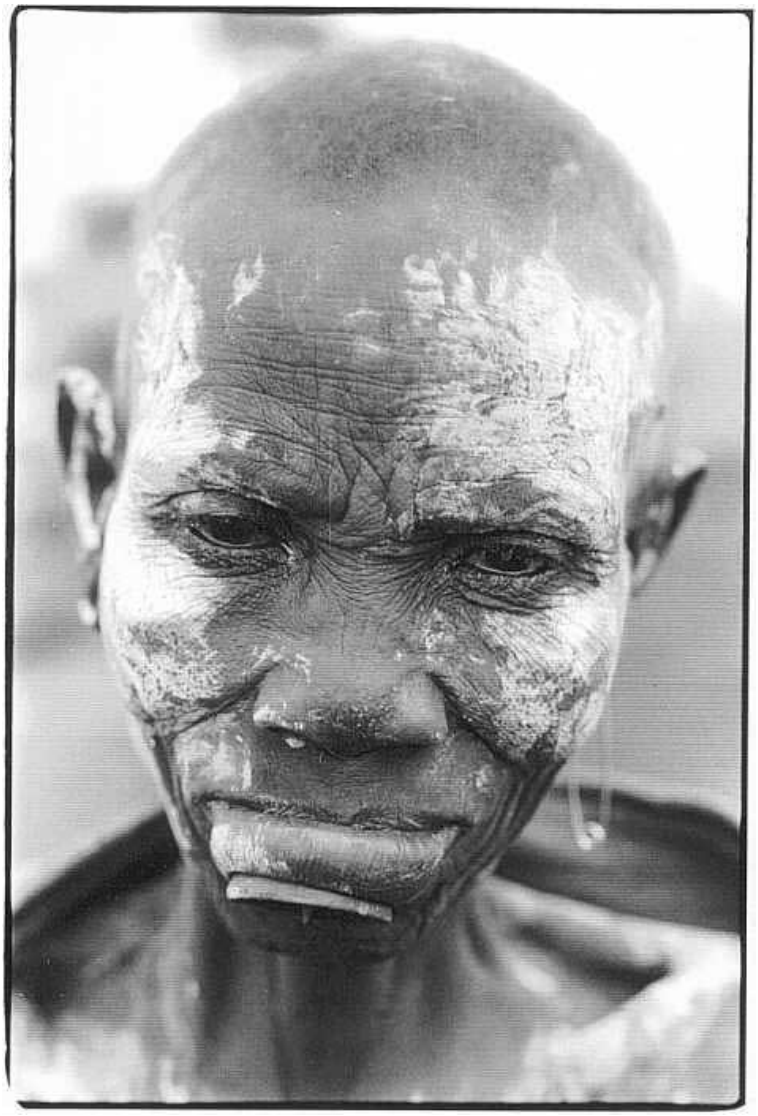
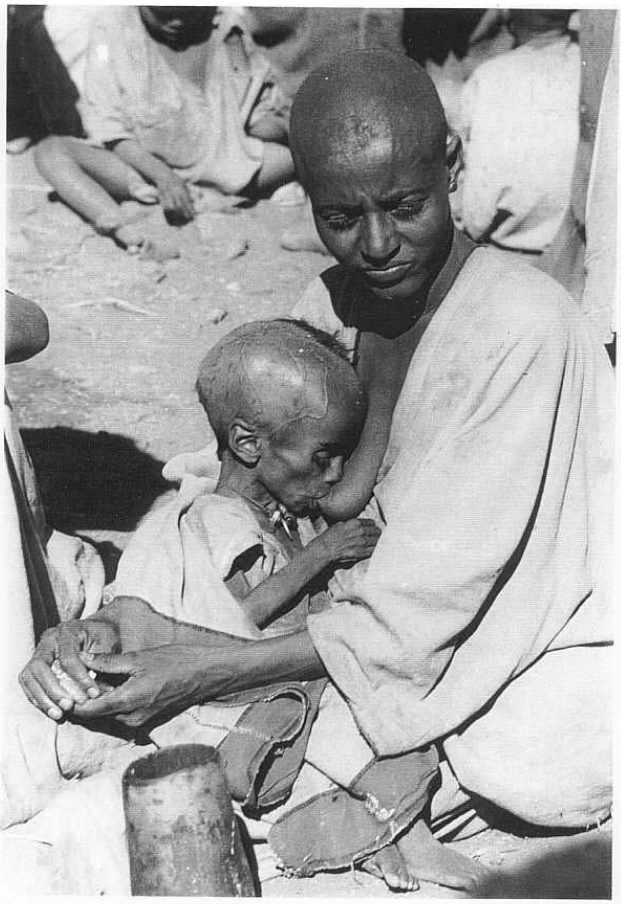
Photo Gallery

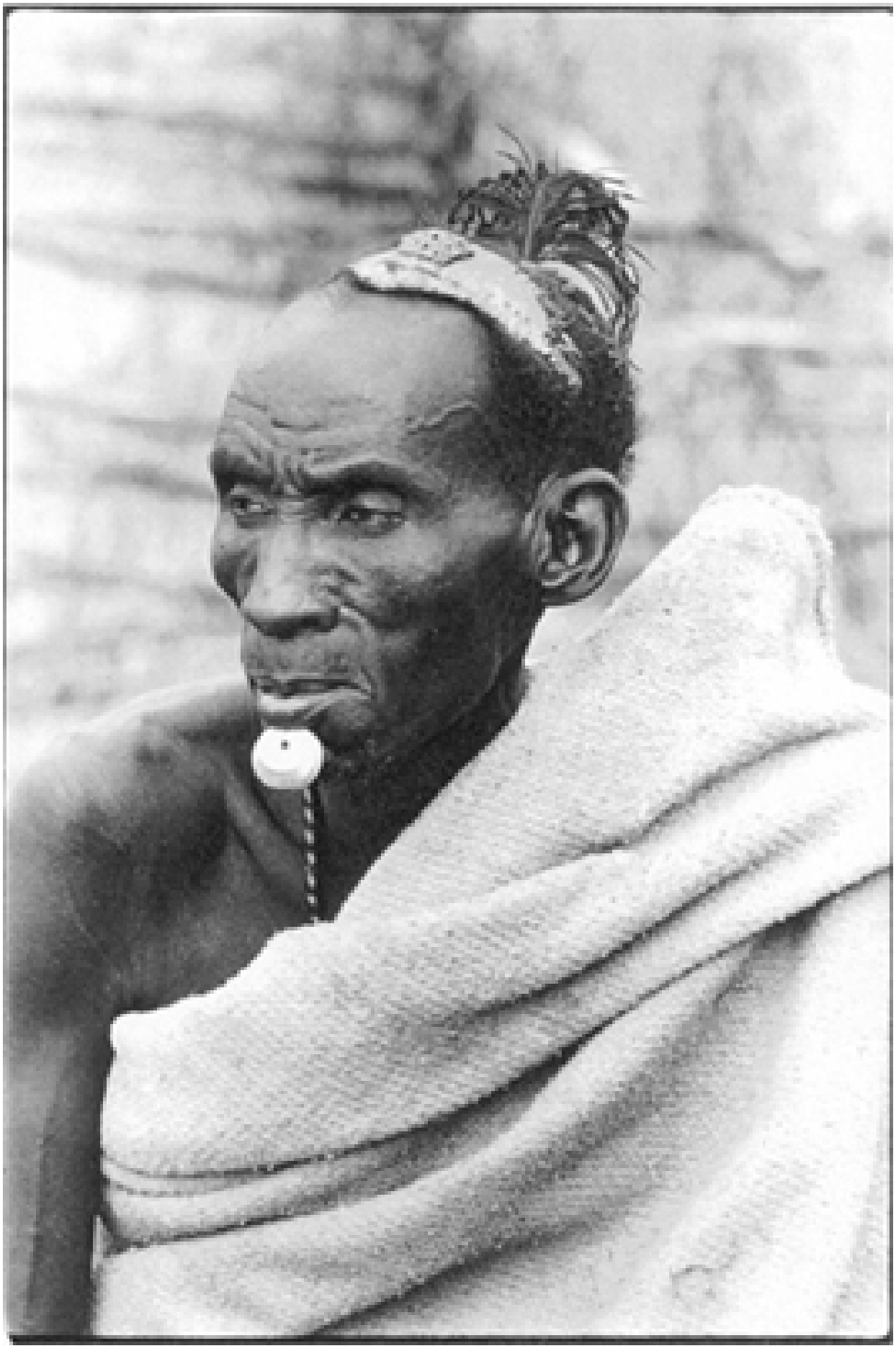
By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

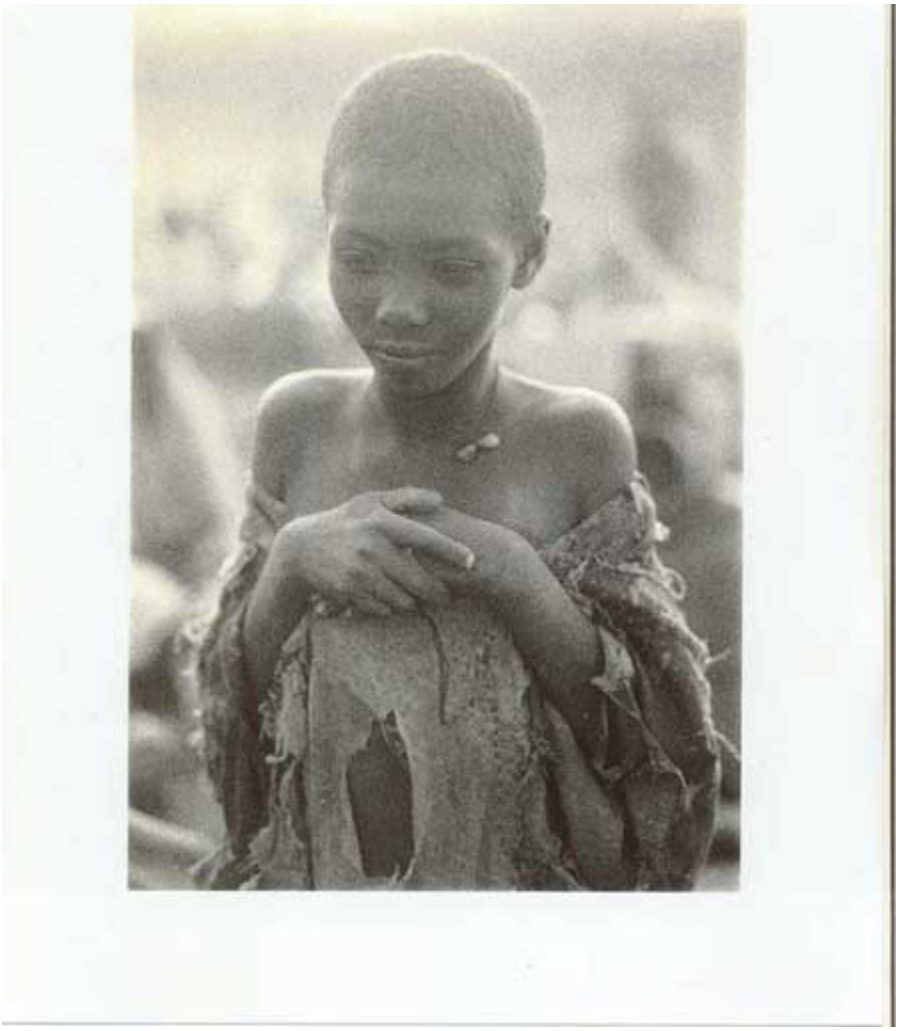
Taken while accompanying friends on a book assignment in the early 1980s, Ira Cohen's photos of Ethiopia offer an intimate look at the lives of rural Ethiopians. The photos represent the disparate situations of people in different parts of the country, from images of tribal celebrations and of tribal elders to a starving infant suckling his mother's breast in a hunger camp for famine victims. Cohen related his experience at the hunger camp at Lalibela in his piece entitled *Christmas in Ethiopia*. "Surrounded by barren mountains in the northern highlands of Ethiopia, ravaged by drought and famine, lies the ancient town of Lalibela, a veritable stronghold of Christianity filled with churches carved out of red rock. It is there we traveled over virtually inaccessible roads through clouds of yellow dust and under the rainbow arches of Kombolcha, Dessie and Weldiya with an Ethiopian driver and our government guide, Worku, who spoke to us eloquently of the plight of his people, of their pride and of their faith. Nowhere was there a hint of green, only the relentless browns and grays of a parched landscape, unworkable farmlands and peasants traveling in search of food."

This series of photos is among the work of perhaps one the most eclectic living American photographers. Cohen's experimental mylar photos were exhibited as a part of a two-person show with Man Ray in Paris. His portraits of people from Julian Beck and the Living Theatre to R. Buckminster Fuller have been included in various publications. He lives in New York City where he continues to write poetry, take photos and make films.









Terror and Liberalism by Paul Berman

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Can't we all just get along? If not, do you mind awfully if we do away with you? Paul Berman argues that realists and leftists alike ignore irrational forces—"pathological mass movements"—that motivate global violence. He accordingly urges that liberal Western societies intervene militarily to stamp out these threats with, as the venerable saying goes, extreme prejudice. Berman delves into the extraordinarily complex question of terrorism and, in so doing, displays a desperate need to occupy the middle ground no matter where it may be. This hoary tactic can place one in strange, and even silly, positions. Where exactly is the middle ground regarding mass murder or female circumcision or slavery? (Spartacists may be annoying extremists but was Spartacus an extremist?) So Berman prudently takes the precaution of controlling where he winds up by dictating where the loony left and right margins are supposedly set.

In *Terror and Liberalism* Berman tirelessly reiterates whatever the mainstream American media finds fit to print. Saddam in 1991 was poised to roll over Saudi Arabia. Arab problems are internally generated because heaven forfend that anyone mention colonial legacies or neo-imperial ploys. Saddam "threw the inspectors out" in 1998 (when they were withdrawn under severe White House pressure). The U.S. consequently "complained from the sidelines"—from which it had infiltrated CIA agents into UNSCOM. Scapegoating is Saddam's "special genius"—although CIA Director George Tenet may beg to differ these days.

Saddam gassed "his own" people, although most Kurds, as the gory record over many decades shows, hardly viewed themselves as "his" people, or even as Iraqis. Gas, of course, evokes gasps of horror in the West, partly because the West cannot be accused of using it, at least not since the RAF lavishly gassed rebel Kurdish and Arab villages in the conveniently forgotten 1920s. Even so stodgy a journal as *Foreign Affairs* noted in 1999 that economic sanctions have killed more people than all other weapons of mass destruction combined. Yet this daintier, distant form of death-dealing doesn't appear to faze Berman, or most Westerners, at all. Berman knows, and plays to, his audience.

Berman also recycles the tall tale that Clinton persuaded Barak to withdraw from "all but small

portions of the West bank" so, accordingly, there is no rational "explanation for Arafat's refusal of this magnanimous offer." Palestinians do not want peace; ergo, they crave jihadic glory. Berman further speculates that they sought wider borders; a ravenous Palestinian imperialism clawing at Israel, or Lebanon or even New Jersey. As for Israel, anything short of Waffen SS behavior is construed as a heartwarming testament to its unparalleled humanity. Jenin was not Lidice; hence, the Israelis there accomplished a "breakthrough in relatively civilized army tactics." Can Israelis, who hail the stand at Massada, really fail to grasp what happens to a populace which feels it has its back to the wall?

Suicide bombers are a stunning inexplicable barbarity who "produced a philosophical crisis, among everyone around the world who wanted to believe that a rational logic governs the world," says Berman. One can say much the same for many who watched the Bush team at work after 9/11. Berman seems to believe that the degree of civilization is measured by the distance at which a state neatly can kill. One gets the impression that if Palestinians had a nifty weapons lab devising remote control devices, Berman would think better of them. By contrast, Berman sees Israel as a perfectly reasonable liberal state, a judgment only about half of Israelis may grant him at any given time, depending on who is in charge.

Berman laments that "war and hysteria" work to keep fearful citizens distracted and obedient, but he imagines this ancient formula applies only to Middle East tyrannies. Berman, like Christopher Hitchens, champions an "anti-totalitarian war" and, thus flatteringly framed, who but fools and tools of tyrants can object? The dark but distinct possibility that overtly noble wars really would be conducted according to *realpolitik* tenets and exploitative aims seems lost on Berman who likes to chide leftists who fret about "America's imperial motives, about the greed of big corporations, and their influence in White House policy; and could not get beyond their worries." Apparently after 9/11 no one was so depravedly partisan as to attach their own agenda to the security crisis for their own advantage. Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain, Berman admonishes, watch the impressive fireworks and shut up.

Berman is wary of realists, too. Realists figure that "world politics is driven by wealth, power, and geography" (although a lot of realists overlook the role of wealth). While it may be unwise to start or end with realist precepts about power, one cannot ignore them, as Berman does, when examining how the world works. To characterize the first Gulf War as fought in defense of Muslims in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia is mad hatter logic—like saying the U.S. cavalry wiped out the Indians to protect Chinese coolies toiling on the railroads. In this same vein, Berman imagines that America sided with the Palestinians. He even quotes an Israeli negotiator lauding Clinton for doing more for the Palestinians than any one else. It's rather like a participant praising the diplomatic feats of Chamberlain at Munich.

Turning to Islam after a brief detour through Camus, Berman contends that "pan-Arabism and the philosophical roots of Europe's right wing nationalisms were the same." Islamic extremism (unlike other religious extremisms?) preaches utter obedience to an unrealizable ideal, and so generates totalitarianism. Totalitarianism and terror are the same. So terror, as defined by the White House, is totalitarian. Naturally, Berman exempts state-sponsored terrorism. All

progress, he also says, depended on “a freedom that recognizes the existence of other freedoms too.” This sounds okay, but he blithely proceeds to applaud “the idea of progress toward ever more freedom, ever more rationality, ever more wealth”—as if these pursuits were not difficult to coordinate, or were not contradictory.

To sustain the pretty notion that liberal democratic societies cannot do systematically illiberal things, he predictably taps a “heart of darkness” argument about King Leopold’s atrocities in the Congo. There, liberal colonialists, evidently demented by the primitive milieu, took up “murder for murders sake.” No, it was murder for profit’s sake. They operated in environs where it was expeditious to work natives to death to extract resources quickly. Liberals aren’t immune to such tempting incentives. Why that would be irrational. One would never guess when reading Berman that the simple-minded Western optimists of the nineteenth century, as he describes them, swiftly conquered 85% of the earth.

Berman’s knowledge of Islam is, to say the least, shaky. He states: “Islamism got under way in Pakistan in the 1930s (organizationally in 1941),” when Pakistan was still only a flickering gleam in Jinnah’s eye. (Perhaps he means the Punjab, or part of it, but how did this get past the editors?) Pious people—one can be pious about a secular ideology too—are very scary critters mostly because their piety usually conceals nasty motives. Throughout the wobbly course of this book he writes as if religion or ideology alone dictates action, with no attention needed for underlying political or economic drives.

Sayyid Qutb, Berman’s key Islamic figure, was a sort of Muslim Straussian, an elitist textual interpreter who spun out an Islam-based theory of alienation. Here was the very same siren song every cult belts out: we offer safe harbor in the bosum of Abraham or Allah or L. Ron Hubbard in exchange for every earthly thing you’ve got. Qutb blamed Socrates’ belief in reason for the ensuing split between materiality and spirit, which inflicted a “hideous schizophrenia” on poor humanity. Even so, Qtub had his lucid moments: as when remarking that John Foster Dulles “wants merely to mobilize a religiously-veneered patriotism that might protect the western order from communism.” The Saudis too were keen to keep their restive populace in line via importing Qutb’s severe brand of religion. The big question is how widespread is this doctrine?

Berman says that the governing elite of Pakistan (presumably Zia) viewed Islamist fundamentalists as better neighbors than secular Marxist ones. (Washington certainly hoped so too, and dished out cash and arms accordingly.) Berman claims that Shariah law in Khomeini’s Iran after 1979 “excited admiration and envy in the Arab and Muslim world.” If so, why was it not instituted in every Muslim majority state? Berman says that the Taliban were celebrated through the Islamic world.” Evidence, please. His whole case rests on the uniqueness of the Islamic fundamentalist threat. So he mentions Sadat’s assassination by a Muslim fundamentalist in 1981 but omits that of Rabin by a Jewish fundamentalist in 1994. Berman’s answer for all our worldly woes is “pathological mass movements.” This diagnosis allows him to remark on “communism morphing into nationalism” in former Yugoslavia without bothering to pry into the role that neo-liberal Western banks had in demolishing the federation in the first

place.

Berman scolds the sappy hand-wringing Left for being seduced by Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot—all of whom at one time or another were allied with the U.S. government (which, as we all know, was in thrall to sappy hand-wringing leftists). He then castigates a faction of 1930s French socialists for an imprudent anti-war stance but somehow fails to mention the French Right's hearty slogan "Better Hitler than Blum." He blandly compares peace demonstrations today to 1930s appeasers. Indeed, dissenters are pictured as nothing less than dyspeptic collaborators with the rabid Taliban whom the West subsequently did not so much bomb as bribe into submission. So those teeming Muslim fanatics know the value of a dollar after all which, perversely, is a hopeful sign. Nonetheless, Berman envisions a long "war between liberalism and the apocalyptic and phantasmagorical movements."

Noam Chomsky is pilloried for explaining "every last quirk of human behavior by invoking a tiny number of factors," unlike, say, the professions of economics or sociology or political science. Berman, by contrast, narrows our buzzing, blooming confusion down tidily to one factor, those darned pathological mass movements. So he apparently believes that Pol Pot would have slouched toward Phnom Penh for his own inscrutable Oriental reasons, and without the midwivery of B-52 carpet bombing or bloody "incursions." Nothing distresses Berman more than the fact that while American media sagely regard Chomsky as a "crank," much of the rest of the planet treats him as a voice worth heeding. But what ultimately becomes crystal clear is that for Berman the whole planet now is pretty much a "pathological mass political movement" mobilizing irrationally to resist the liberal national interests of the United State, as ordained by born again George W. Bush.

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Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism by Joshua Muravchik

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There are, to be sure, intelligent right-wing critiques of socialism, as both concept and practice. Joshua Muravchik's The Rise and Fall of Socialism, however, does not constitute such a critique. Its greatest failing is that it simply has nothing new to say, and as is to be expected, what it does have to say is largely wrong.

Supposedly, Joshua Muravchik is to be taken seriously because he comes from a socialist family and he was the national chairman of the youth section of the Socialist Party, USA, from 1968 until 1973. But Muravchik's SP was a quite different animal than it was in the days of Eugene V. Debs, dominated as it was by supporters of the Vietnam War. Anti-Communism had become the sole motivating factor for "socialists" of Muravchik's stripe, hence their general move toward neoconservatism was perfectly predictable. Like his erstwhile comrades from the former SP (now inaccurately calling itself "Social Democrats USA"), Muravchik has moved from anti-Communism to a wholesale rejection of all strands of socialism. His understanding of "socialism" largely reduces it to a notion of state- (or communal colony-) driven social engineering to achieve earthly perfection. There have always been what the American Marxist Hal Draper called "the two souls of socialism": that of "enlightened" elites autocratically seeking to create "rational" societies, and that of ordinary people working toward a world where all institutions are accountable and socially-produced wealth is democratically controlled by those who create it. Muravchik sees only elites, and the "other soul" of socialism is left unexamined. Do not expect to find an index entry for "workers' self-management" in this book.

Little of what Muravchik says about Gracchus Babeuf or Robert Owen is controversial. Babeuf, as Draper once wrote, spearheaded the idea of the Educational Dictatorship of benevolent anti-capitalists. Owen was also elitist, but Muravchik is considerably easier on him because he was a non-revolutionary who "recognized that there was no need to seize power. Endowed with some land and capital, socialists could form their own communities." Commenting on the failure of Owen's utopian society, New Harmony—and, later in the book, the Israeli kibbutzim—Muravchik offers the traditional "socialism goes against human nature" canard: "If men were angels then an economy might succeed without selfish incentives, but if men were angels it would not matter whether the economy succeeded since they would have no material needs." Whatever relevance this may have to the socialism of utopian colonists, it is irrelevant as a critique of *political* democratic socialism, which has always acknowledged the importance of "selfish" incentives under conditions of (relative) scarcity. Men and women are indeed not angels, and among capitalism's problems is that it encourages them to be devils: the market encourages every individual to regard and treat all others as means to earn his or her living,

just as it compels every firm to act as if it were the center of the universe, never mind the "externalities."

Muravchik's analysis of Marx and Engels similarly lacks depth. Besides attributing the phrase "property is theft" to "Marxism"—it was the anarchist forefather Pierre Joseph-Proudhon who coined it—he rehashes the controversy of Marx's use of anti-Semitic language, specifically the stereotype of Jews as merchant-hucksters. Muravchik fails to mention that the language of Part II of Marx's *On the Jewish Question* followed the view of the Jews' role given in an essay *On the Money System* which had just been written by Moses Hess, one of the progenitors of Zionism. Subsequent Zionists used similar phraseology.[1] Marx supported legal equality and civil rights for Jews; his analysis was that Jews were essentially a commercial class within medieval Europe, and the Jewish religion was an ideology reflecting the outlook of this class. While it is certainly true that Marx wrote terrible things in his personal letters to Engels, such as his derision of German socialist leader Ferdinand Lassalle as a "Jewish nigger," even as he publicly opposed black slavery in the United States, this merely proves that Marx was, in fact, a nineteenth century European. There was nothing anti-Semitic in the *politics* of Marx and Engels—unless one considers atheism to be objectively anti-Semitic, and even then, Marx opposed the attempt by Mikhail Bakunin and his followers to make atheism an official doctrine of the International Workingmen's Association. Whatever Marx's personal failings, the movement that took his name was in no way anti-Semitic. August Bebel famously attacked anti-Semitism as "the socialism of fools"; Karl Kautsky denounced New Testament authors for demonizing the Jews and inciting hatred against them as the murderers of Christ in his book, *The Foundations of Christianity*; Lenin wrote "it is not the Jews who are the enemies of the working people" but "the capitalists of all countries."[2]

Muravchik claims that Marx and Engels "reconnected socialism to the thrill of violence"—as if they ever supported violence for its own sake, or ever said that countries which were sufficiently democratic and non-militarized might achieve socialism by peaceful means. He dismisses *Capital* as "ponderous" and "blather"; one wonders what the noted conservative economist Joseph Schumpeter saw in it. (Of course, Schumpeter could understand the difference between use-value and exchange-value; Muravchik is confounded by such stuff. Then again, he terms class struggle to be "high theory," i.e., not real.)

He attacks the duo for seeing themselves as "leaders of the proletariat"—never part of Marx and Engels's self-description—despite their lack of working class roots. Indeed, this is a frequent theme in Muravchik's book: real workers always become, at the most, reformist social democrats, while revolutionaries are always from the affluent classes (this former member of the American SP seems to know nothing of Eugene Debs's background) and socialism itself is ultimately an ideology imported into the working class by intellectuals from outside it. Irony of ironies, Muravchik's view is a sort of inverted Trotskyism: it is socialism, not ordinary reformism, which represents the influence of "alien class forces" on the proletariat! Missing in all this is any acknowledgement of the commitment by Marx and Engels to "winning the battle of democracy," as *The Communist Manifesto* puts it, or any examination of their role in transforming socialism from a doctrine of wealthy colony-founders and secret conspirators to a

doctrine of working-class self-emancipation from exploitation. A serious critique of Marx and Engels would comment on their real flaws: their denigration of the role of moral values and individual rights in promoting socialist goals and their belief that an abundant communist society would transcend the need to deliberate politically about its economic priorities. Instead, Muravchik merely offers the conservative same-old same-old.

Muravchik is far nicer to Eduard Bernstein, who embraced the goals of "more political and social legislation, better pay and working conditions" while abandoning the idea of a socialist "final goal." While in retrospect, Bernstein's rejection of orthodox Marxist teleology was correct, the ultimate result of the logic of Bernstein's politics has lately been turned against its own reformist ends. For if the logic of Bernsteinian social democracy has been, as Stephen Eric Bronner puts it, "the achievement of incremental reforms through calculable compromises with the party as broker,"[3] the role of social democracy is now, in our age of capitalist globalization, at best to polish the sharpest edges of corporate power—a role embraced by Tony Blair, whom Muravchik praises as an "undertaker" of socialism. Similarly, Clement Atlee gets off easy because he was a gradualist social democrat, though still deluded about the ostensible benefits of public ownership. The difficulties of the Atlee government and, decades later, the sudden about-face of the radical-reformist Mitterand government of France supposedly illustrate the folly of socialist interference in the market. In reality, they are simply examples of the perennial dilemma that socialist governments face: the specter of capital flight, the constraints imposed by the need for continued private investment.

The twentieth century's exemplar of the radical-democratic "other soul" of socialism, Rosa Luxemburg, is dismissed by Muravchik as a "child of privilege" whose mantra was "the spontaneity of the masses," an oft-stated myth. Lenin, of course, is demonized, and while Lenin's thought and political practice deserves sharp criticism, Muravchik mostly offers the traditional fallacies, claiming that the Bolshevik revolution was a mere coup d'etat and attributing all its tragedies to Leninism's innate evil and nothing to the civil war in which the Bolsheviks were fighting a full scale invasion by fourteen different states.[4] Lenin—who supposedly ordered "tens of thousands of deaths," though no proof is offered—gets blamed not only for Stalinism but also for fascism because of his supposed similarities with Mussolini, a former member of the Italian Socialist Party; the Fascists supposedly believed themselves the "true heirs" of Lenin despite their anti-Marxism. Muravchik goes so far as to claim that "Mussolini's rule rested far more on popular support than Lenin's." All he proves in his chapter on fascism is that the "logic" of anti-internationalist anti-capitalism leads in fascist directions.[5] And while few will disagree with Muravchik's assessment of the bureaucratically-directed "African socialism" of the late Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, he takes no notice that even Tanzania has suffered much less than some of its neighbors who never strayed from the World Bank/IMF orthodoxy, such as Rwanda and Burundi. The "free market" has devastated postcolonial Africa. Capitalism has failed Africa as surely as has "Ujamaa."

The heroes of Muravchik's book are Samuel Gompers and George Meany, for their role in making America "impervious to socialism." "Pure and simple unionism," Gompers style, supposedly represented "true" trade unionism uncorrupted by middle-class socialist

intellectuals who cared nothing for "meliorating the immediate conditions of the workers." The historic opposition of Gompers's American Federation of Labor to the inclusion of women, blacks, Mexican Americans, Chinese Americans, or most unskilled laborers in the labor movement is ignored, as is the autocratic nature of the unionism that he consolidated. Meany is praised for being an enthusiastic Cold Warrior who purged Communists from American unions and "rid[ding] the movement of racial discrimination." The truth is that Meany opposed the historic March on Washington in 1963, and whatever efforts he did put toward anti-racist measures—such as lobbying for the 1965 Civil Rights Bill—were done in order to stave off criticisms for having done little in the past; he was far more interested in fighting Communists (and left critics) than fighting racists. Muravchik, of course, identifies with Meany's support of the Vietnam War and his animosity toward the peace movement (Meany once denounced peaceniks as "fags"). He glosses over the merger of the foreign operations of the AFL-CIO with the counterintelligence sections of the CIA and their reactionary consequences both in Latin America and at home. He repeats the falsehood that Meany molded the labor movement "into a mighty force in American life."

The truth is that, as Paul Buhle writes, labor's support for U.S. imperialism "paid virtually all of its [job-creating] benefits in the short run, and to a relatively select proportion of working people. Rather than reproducing union loyalty, the defense-linked rise of Sun Belt industry created large pockets of white working class conservatism, just as big-ticket construction of suburbs reinforced racial boundaries and in several different ways greatly diminished prospects of union democracy. The environmental recklessness of everything-for-production, taken with hypocritical race policies and a staggering indifference to the expanding clerical (especially female) sectors of the workforce, made the labor movement increasingly unpalatable and unsuccessful as time went on."[6] The weakness of the U.S. labor movement today is the legacy of Cold War business unionism. To this, Muravchik is indifferent; it is, after all, working class conservatism that he supports, or more precisely working class support for the "American counter-model" to socialism. As the Stalinists of yesteryear saw the USSR or China as the Vanguard Country, so Muravchik sees America as the Vanguard, the envy of the world. No, America has "not always been loved," but its imperialism is only "supposed." Given how many people around the world currently see the U.S. as the world's main danger to peace, the publication of such comments could not have been more ill timed.

Muravchik sees the dying out of the Israeli kibbutzim as the final nail in socialism's coffin. But the kibbutzim, regardless of their adoption of the formula "to each according to their needs" (an impossibility under conditions of scarcity) or adoption of communal childrearing (not much of a priority outside of utopian colonies), were hardly pure institutions. In 1964, ninety-two percent of kibbutzim were affiliated to companies which sold goods produced for a profit. This profit ended up in the hands of companies such as Koor (a major company of construction and manufacturing company) and AMPAL (American Israel Corporation, a finance company that directed U.S. capital investment in Israel), not Israeli workers. During the 1960s, more than fifty percent of kibbutz labor was wage labor, not voluntary labor, with the "dirty jobs" performed by foreign Jewish volunteers. This is not to mention the kibbutzim's role in helping the Haganah army to drive out Arab inhabitants who had not already fled, confiscating their

land, and later destroying the remaining houses—not exactly behavior exemplifying proletarian internationalism.7 And the increasing social inequality in Israel, mirroring that in the U.S., goes unmentioned by Muravchik.

Muravchik's book ends with a return to the theme of socialism-as-religion, stating that in contrast to traditional religion, socialism "lacks any internal code of conduct to limit what believers may do. The socialist narrative turned history into a morality play without the morality." Democratic socialism, he says, is a contradiction in terms; socialism is inevitably coercive. Of course, capitalism is coercive—it is based upon the coercion of market forces, backed up by state power. History has shown that capitalism is compatible with the most coercive possible governments, including ones that claim to be "socialist." Capitalism is itself innately authoritarian. But the whole point of socialism, when it has not been hijacked by authoritarians, is not the elite engineering of the "New Man," but the full democratization of political and economic power; indeed, the end of power itself as the organizing principle of social life.8 This is the core of the "other soul" of socialism. It is still worth fighting for.

Notes

1See Hal Draper, "Marx and the Economic-Jew Stereotype," in ***Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution****, Vol.1:* ***State and Bureaucracy*** (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), pp. 591-608.

2V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972) p. 252.

3Stephen Eric Bronner, *Socialism Unbound*, 2nd Edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), p. 65.

4"With the country isolated within the international community, facing economic collapse and internal revolts, it was no wonder that the Bolsheviks should have become obsessed with unity, discipline, economic efficiency, and the administrative centralization of power." Bronner, ibid., pp. 96-97.

5Muravchik argues that Nazism did not differ from traditional socialisms in its "virulence against despised peoples," citing Marx's desire for the "annihilation" of "Croats, Pandurs, Czechs and similar scum." The context of those comments is the revolutionary upsurge of 1848, when on the promise of national autonomy (limited self-government)—and with the backing of Tsarist Russia—the Czechs, Croats, Slovenians and Ukrainians sided with the Hapsburg monarchy to smash the revolts of the Polish and Hungarian nationalists and the democrats of Vienna. Marx and Engels opposed the "principle of nationalities" (promulgated by Napoleon) as a doctrine that falsely claimed that all nations had the equal historical, geographical, political and industrial conditions for a viable independence. This doctrine was being used to justify the division and occupation of Poland and to incite the Serbs, Croats, Ukrainians, Slovaks, and Czechs. Marx and Engels supported the right of the great European nations to independence, but nationalities that were not struggling against imperial rule could claim no such right. They would never become nations and embark upon their own path of independent democratic

development. Instead, civilization would be imposed on them by the great historic nations. A Darwinian view, perhaps, but not analogous to Nazi doctrine.

6Paul Buhle, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland, and the Tragedy of American Labor* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999), p. 2.

7See Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

8This is how Ralph Miliband puts it in *Socialism for a Sceptical Age* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 57.

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Why Orwell Matters, by Christopher Hitchens

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

As I walked toward my lodging at a respectable widow's house near the Marino, my thoughts turned to teeth. I lost two molars when visiting the Hyde Park Exhibition in 1851. I blame the Sudan giant, sent by the Khedive of Egypt to decorate his pavilion. Such strong bones: camel meat, I expect. I left a great deal of his ebony carcass in the remaining market gardens of St. Marylebone. Caused a deuce of a scandal. Anyone would think he was a Knight of the Garter instead of the younger son of a prosperous slave trader. Of course, they were all against slavery. The British government, the Egyptians, the French and the Sudanese, but everyone knows how to look away when a financial interest requests a little accommodation: a blind eye or a job for a brother-in-law. And theoreticians like Malthus or Adam Smith have a lot to answer for. While piously regretting the agony, they reckoned our Irish Famine a great social success. It reduced the population by half and improved the acreage available for pasture and ranching.

I arrived at my lodgings to be greeted warmly by Mrs. Devereux, who set about preparing a meal of codlings and ragout. This excellent woman, originally from Wexford, I believe, and a true Munster lady, was nevertheless descended from the stray fruit of the Richard Devereux who offered up his head in the Tower of London to Tudor political scheming. An ignoble death, yes, but his generous seed thrives in Ireland where he had served his Queen a little unwisely.

After the meal, before a fire of tree trimmings, I set about examining my clues to the identity and fate of my young quarry who had so successfully eluded me on Ireland□s Eye. I admired her ingenuity, which made me long to meet her. I felt we might have a lot in common. Yet, somehow I was perfectly able to reconcile this feeling with the knowledge that I felt compelled to eat her; or, at least, her more succulent parts. There is always a rejected residue, as in Nature. A lion eats part of its prey, scavenging animals snarl over most of the remainder, and there is always a little left for the vultures. In Ireland there were always scavengers. The wolves driven into the open by the rape of the Munster forests, the foxes, the pine martens, the crows and the eagles. And after them the insects, wasps and the demon of corruption itself, a living and baleful entity.

Ah, but this is a scatological digression. I laid out my clues on a collapsible bezique table, such as were quite popular a hundred years ago and are still found lying around. Perhaps even used for bezique or patience. I dipped a phosphorous Lucifer stick down into the bottle, which still contained 1/10 fluid oz. of liquid, and touched it to the back of my hand. It made a dark brown-purple spot, which I enlarged to a short stroke. When dry it remained insoluble under tap water in the scullery but came away readily with powdered pumice from my washstand. I

resolved to leave it with an intelligent apothecary on the North Strand to learn more.

The handkerchief was incomplete, but by laying it on a sheet of foolscap I could deduce that it was originally nine inches square. I examined the lace crochet. Beyond being pretty in a girlish way, it seemed neutral of identity. As a nervous relief I laid a piece of fine paper on the needlework and rubbed it with a fingertip smeared with lamp soot. This was an old trick, employed in divination or to seek a different perspective of the same object.

I did it idly, almost out of habit, not hoping for any enlightenment. Almost immediately I could pick out the oddly-formed letters MACN on a wider cartouche segment of the lace on the leg of the drawers. This was facing the front of the garment, though it was hard to tell. A similar lacey pattern that would have hung over the back of the knee of the wearer seemed to show the letters CON . . . Y. A degree of speculation was involved, since the art of the crochet hook or, perhaps, the skill of the crocheteuse, did not lend itself to clear calligraphy. The purpose of the lace, I am told, is twofold. To reassure the wearer as to her status, her social and general acceptability, or to titivate her limbs when undressing before a lover or a young husband. Country maidens wore none at all, nor do most serving girls, as the reader has probably noticed. In these classes, a shift or a petticoat is usually found sufficient. This tells us something about the wearer of this half garment.

She was not a young lady born in that class, or she would not have traveled by horse tram and certainly not alone. Not a milkmaid or a servant girl, so what? A shopkeeper□s daughter or the favorite daughter of a senior clerk in a city counting house. Speculation is so fascinating, but something more solid is needed. For people like me, and we are very rare beings, the hunt is obsessive and cannot be set aside or evaded. We are chosen by some destiny as hunters and all our blood and flesh is directed to that end, whatever moral doubts or aesthetic reservations which centuries of experience and ever-changing cultures may have insulated our bestial core.

So I rang for my landlady, an intelligent woman with an extensive knowledge of local events and important trivialities.

“Is there a good apothecary in the neighborhood, Mrs. Devereux?”

“There is indeed, Mr. Fitzlupus, just down the road. A fine Medical Hall with the usual three jars of colored liquid in the window and the two pyramids of rhubarb and garlic pills.”

“Garlic pills?”

“Yes, Mr. Fitzlupus. His own brand. Young Mr. Stoker next door is studying medicine and swears by them. So do I. For the fever, stones or even the gout. Economic too. Look at the cost of getting the steam tram to Lucan Spa and drinking that awful water at tuppence a glass.”

“Quite so, Mrs. Devereux.”

“And sitting in the water in a wet shift, pardon my mentioning it, sir.”

“Of course, of course. We are both, I think adults. I think I will visit your apothecary.”

“Straight down the road past Fairview Corner, you can’t miss it.”

A few minutes later I pushed the door of the Medical Hall and discovered Mr. Jeremy Owens, an amiable and observant Welshman, in the act of casting pills from a boxwood mold. He was about forty, with slightly wavy brown hair, well coiffeured, and a moustache trimmed to a point where it grew down the sides of his mouth. He was dressed in striped trousers, linen shirt and green waistcoat, rather like a surgeon in an amputation theater. I produced my small bottle from the island and asked if he could analyze its remnants. He uncorked it and smelled with deep sniffs. ‘Well, let us see now,’ he announced.

He put his finger on the opening, inverted the bottle and tipped his tongue to the dark spot on his finger. He did this a few times, then poured some water from a flask into a drinking glass and cleansed his mouth. He repeated the process before drawing a few drops onto a sheet of white glazed paper. He examined it by eye before drying it over the fantail of a gas burner. Scratching the dried stain with a scalpel, he pursed his lips and said: ‘As I thought. A solution of potassium permanganate in walnut juice.’

“Walnut juice. Good heavens.”

“A very intense stain for skin, wood or anything, really. The potassium permanganate is also a purplish stain when its crystals are dissolved in water. It is for writing on a reluctantly permeable surface: not paper. Polished wood, smooth stone, shell, even human skin.’

He laughed dismissively.

“I see! Thank you very much. Instead of enlightening me you have added to my perplexity. But I am grateful. Pray what is your fee?”

“Don’t bother about that. Need any garlic pills? You look a bit pale to me.”

Now I know, and many others know, the popular belief that garlic is a bane to the Deathless. Well, we werewolves are the only deathless ones. All others are mere hobgoblins, pisogues and mindless thoolermerauns without corporal reality. All the garlic in the world would not trouble their insubstantial reality nor could it cure the belief in them by the ignorant. Down the years I have banqueted on their bodies: usually young ones. Either sex will do, though my tastes incline me to young women. My three sisters near Ballymore Eustace prefer young men, especially poets and musicians. Goodness knows they eat infrequently but their cave is well known. The Earl of Kildare and the Duke of Ormonde both rode to see them, but kept out of sight, far from the mouth of the cave.

I suspect the fact that the were-girls were naked as well as transcendentally beautiful has something to do with it. Typical of humans. Their lives are so brief that scattering or collecting their seed is an urgent need. My own sexual urge is enormous, coming up to my killing season,

but I suspect that a natural philosopher with his brass microscope would find my sperm count nonexistent. In my pre-menopausal phase I suspect that I infect with infertility. But I am no expert in these matters.

However, my business with the apothecary was done. I bought five boxes of pills, resolving to throw them in the horribly polluted River Tolka nearby. As I left I remarked amiably, “I hope you enjoy your work with pills and powder cachets.”

He shook his head. “I have a very sad duty, assisting Dr. McEvoy in a post-mortem examination of a young woman whose body was recovered from the estuary yesterday. She must have been digging for sand eels because, although she was dressed in a two-piece suit, her feet were bare and her stockings were in her pocket.”

“Would you describe her as a boule de suif?”

“Plump, he smiled. Pleasantly plump, anyway.

I felt excited. “Could I come with you? I am a licensed surgeon.

I hoped he wouldn’t ask me when and where I was awarded this distinction. The answer, “In the wars of the Spanish Succession,” sounded a long time ago, even though it only feels a few years to me. Anyway, I never served under John Churchill and not very much with Dillon’s regiment in Flanders. Ah, the happy days before the Hanoverians crossed the sea to flaunt their weighty mistresses in London. Their chair carriers earned their pennies the hard way.

But the apothecary, who was a Huguenot or a Moravian, appeared prepared to take me at my word. I tend to speak with gentle friendly authority.

“Dr. McEvoy’s experience in forensic matters is not extensive. I am sure he would be delighted by your kind offer. Certainly he relies on me to detect poisons or certain drugs. I rely mainly on smell, which is usually unpleasant when removed from the stomach of a corpse.”

“Are you sure that will be acceptable? How will I know? Should I bring my surgical case?”

“Don’t concern yourself. I will send a messenger with a note and a note of confirmation to you afterwards, if you will furnish your name and address.” The apothecary twisted his mouth and raised his eyebrows when I gave my name. “Mr. Fitzlupus. Unusual name, but of good Hiberno-Norman stock, I am sure. Well, sir, you shall hear from me.”

The same evening, after lamplight, the messenger boy arrived with a note indicating a time and place for the post-mortem, at half past eight in the temporary morgue in Store Street just beyond, but safely so, the brothel district, so beloved of callow college students and rutting ranks of the British army. It often seemed that alcoholic drink and rowdy company were as important as willing flesh, though both were usually in full supply.

The following morning I hailed the first car passing: a jaunting or high car, speedy dangerous vehicles with high strapped seats, attainable by steel stirrups and perched above very high wheels. The driver, or jarvey, faces forward at the same height as the imperiled passengers, flicking his whip and coaxing the nag into a sportive gallop. We were in Store Street in a few minutes, much quicker than by cab, a double fare hansom or a more commodious growler.

The dark door was open but the flagged passages and adjoining rooms were bare, cold and empty. I waited. A woman appeared. She stared at me with apparent hostility while removing her shawl and bonnet. Are you Surgeon Fitzlupus? she admonished me severely.

“Yes, ma am. I am waiting for the others. They are late. Is this the right place?”
“They ll be along, don t worry, sir. The chemist usually picks up Dr. McEvoy from the pub where he has breakfast. Meat pie and tay and a few brandies. Can’t start the day without it all.”

Even as she spoke I heard voices and discerned the apothecary and a large fleshy-faced man with a Monaghan accent whom I took to be McEvoy. I distrusted him instantly, as much as I doubted the surroundings. The apothecary smiled and attempted an introduction, which McEvoy almost ignored.

“Where s the specimen? he practically bawled. “I haven’t got all morning.”

“You have some visits in Mountjoy Square and Belvedere, said his assistant, his soft voice concealing a possible irony. I discovered that he answered to the name of Jeremy.

Dr. McEvoy was impatient. Furthermore, he did not remove his jacket or don an apron. “Where’s the cadaver?” he demanded angrily. Why isn t everything ready? I am a busy man.”

The Dublin-bred Sarah Gump took things easily. It ll all be ready in a minute, sir. In a couple of ticks.

McEvoy grunted while the nurse, if such she was, wheeled in a three-wheeled flat trolley on which the body of a young woman was lying, not very symmetrically, one arm hanging down the side.

“Dammit, woman,” McEvoy roared. Do you call this ready? What do you call all this?” He fingered the hem of her skirt.

“Give us a chance, sir, the polis men only brung her down here last night.”

“Plenty of time. Well, get her ready.”

The doctor s brain was becoming heated. Jeremy had been rummaging in his bag and produced a pair of tailor s shears, about to cut away the crumpled clothing from the body.

God forgive you, the nurse stopped him with indignation. How do you think I can live on a

half crown fee?” She undid the waistband of the dead girl’s skirt and pulled it down over the feet, folded it and put it on a bench. She struggled with the bodice or jackets but got it off with Jeremy’s help. It joined the skirt, neatly folded on the bench. A petticoat and a sort of shift proved more difficult, due to the drawstrings and sodden knots. The dragon permitted Jeremy to cut these. They could easily be replaced. The girl was wearing no drawers, but one garment remained: a tailored band of brocade covering the rib cage and held by three inches of lacing, slightly loose or shelved on top to support the breasts and hold them to a degree of uplift decreed by fashion.

By this time, almost ten minutes later, McEvoy was incandescent and seemed about to strike the woman, but Jeremy, quietly efficient, snipped the laces that joined the girdle. The two sides popped apart and the woman manage to drag the garment from under the corpse. This meant that the body was lying slightly to one side, bent, one breast hanging to one side and the other unsupported and flattened by its own weight on her ribs.

Jeremy nodded and together we succeeded in laying the poor girl out on her back, crudely brushing back her hair on to the bare boards of the kitchen table and closing her eyes. Rigor mortis was ebbing. I carried out these duties dumbstruck and with a strange mixture of feelings. This poor relic was the girl in the horse tram and Ireland’s Eye. I know that people say the world is small, but this made it seem like an atomic globule, such as the natural scientists postulate.

Together Jeremy and myself had laid the poor girl out and were waiting for Dr. McEvoy’s directions as to where to mark her body for the incisions. To our surprise, instead of indicating anything, or indeed examining the front of the body in any detail whatever, while we were struggling with the girl he had been striding up and down the dismal room, testing the tap on the trough and pouring noggins of brandy into the cup on his pocket flask.

As we awaited his instructions he yelled impatiently, “When the devil are you going to prepare her fully?”

“What do you require, sir?” Jeremy spoke quietly.

“She isn’t shaved, dammit. Can’t see much with all that.”

Both of us stared in puzzlement. Two pockets of hair in the armpits and a firm growth in her groin. Surely these would not form the first points of inquiry. As we stood cogitating McEvoy roared, “Her head, dammit. Get her scalp clear. How the hell do you expect me to see through all that hair?”

After a couple of seconds we understood that he needed her head shaved. But why? The apparent cause of death was due to drowning, although injury or even death could have occurred before she entered the water. Did he expect head injuries? We encountered no major extrusion of flesh when combing her hair. Combing her hair? McEvoy must have thought we were mad. However, Jeremy set to work with his shears while I tried to follow with a freshly

stropped scalpel. For some reason I hated the task, as did Jeremy. The girl had been my quarry. My need would have done her the ultimate harm, but this poor thing, spread on a kitchen table, aroused pity. The shaving of her head was the final humiliation.

With some difficulty, Jeremy, the woman and myself managed to turn her face downward to crop and shave the top and back of her head. It made her look more impersonal, remote, sexless. Beyond humiliation.

Before turning her onto her back again I noticed a possible wound in the middle of her back and some broken brownish marks on her left buttock. The shaving was so difficult with the scalpel that I did not have time to examine either mark in detail. Dr. McEvoy would do so and put them in his report. He was not the kind of man worth advising on technical, or indeed I suspect, any matters.

What followed was astonishing. Peering closely at the slopes of her crown, above her forehead, he went to his bag and produced a razor, a jar of soft soap solution and an ordinary round hog fitch. After lathering accessible areas of the patchy stubbly cranium, he shaved it, lovingly. Then with a fine sable brush dipped in a black pigmented suspension from another sealed pickle jar he marked off areas of bare scalp. When he had finished impatiently, we both knew his next need. Together we turned the poor girl over on her face again.

The doctor went at it like a man driven by a feral force, which he probably was, and fine-shaved and marked out irregular areas on the back portion of her head. Then he transferred all this, with some accuracy, to several sheets of paper printed with head profiles. Dr. McEvoy was a phrenologist! We waited in the cold dark room while this mad discipline was recorded.

We were still shivering when he abruptly ceased and began to pack his bag. Neither Jeremy nor I could believe it. "But Doctor, the wound on her back, the marks on her posterior. Surely . . ." McEvoy started to pull on his coat, then fumbled in his pocket for a coin to give the woman orderly, if that is what she was.

"No need to go further," he snapped. "I have all the information that I can expect. A member of the female criminal class. An abortionist, a poisoner, a prostitute. It's not important."

"But how did she die? You have to write the report for the coroner."

"Pooh, that's easy. Drowning, suicide, or misadventure. That's for the police to decide."

"But the marks on her body?"

"The matter is closed. One criminal less; I have the evidence from her own cranium. You can't have better evidence that that. You might call it cranial confession." With that, he left abruptly and after his footsteps pounded down the flagged corridor we heard him whistle for his conveyance.

Even the dour woman was surprised. She must have been used to many a grisly performance on the same kitchen table. But I had to find out more.

Jeremy held the colza oil lamp over the dorsal area and I examined and probed. Something like a sharp knife had pierced the flesh between the ribs, probably punctured a lung. That□s all I could extrapolate from a brief and, I might say, highly illegal probe. My surgical apprenticeship dated back to the wars against the Sun King, under Marlborough and Queen Anne, when science had just begun. We have come a long way since then. Nowadays people take beef tea for consumption, fish extract for brain fever and carbolic acid for wound infection and gangrene. My medical knowledge is somewhat out of date. In any case I might entangle poor Jeremy. People are always suspicious of apothecaries. A customer buys a noggin of laudanum and takes 100 drops in a bottle of Bual to kill the sharp taste. He or she or someone in the household dies, and who is blamed? The apothecary who was lulled into charity by wrenching stories of a toothache or petit mal.

The vulnerability of both Jeremy and myself became apparent very shortly. After the doctor□s exit, the two of us had examined the stab wound in the girl□s back and thought it was a possible cause of death. We had also examined the left cheek of her buttocks carefully, using the oil lamp held by hand and a magnifying or quizzing glass: a useful device, in a pinchbeck cover that I used to carry on my watch chain.

Together we made out the following stray letters, part of a longer inscription in some sort of brown ink, possibly done with a reed and pith pen, but this is pure guesswork. Both Jeremy and I thought of the bottle of inky substance which had been identified by Jeremy by his singular analytical process the previous day. My passing strange chemistry affords me a stunningly sharp discerning vision and I read out the words to Jeremy, who wrote them down as best he could. When we came to examine them we found: □□ as he sun □ to God □ he sets □ look □ turned □ose.□

The singular canvas chosen by the graphologist (for it was certainly not written by the girl) was scarcely large enough to contain the message, if such it was. The last barely decipherable syllables were on the top of her thigh, just under the gluteal fold. The lettering had been blurred by the abrasion of clothing, perhaps even more than if she had worn her drawers. It had also been diminished by action of sea or brackish water and the handling of the body on recovery, of which we know nothing.

I called on the woman to restore the clothing, since we could hardly leave the body bald and naked on the table. To my surpass and apprehension she replied aggressively, □They□re gone. Me daughter took them through the yard.□

□But this is theft,□ cried Jeremy.

□Sorry a bit of it. They□re no more than me rights.□

□This body was not a pauper,□ I protested. □By now the police may well have found her

relations.

It's up to them, then. The clothes will be half laundered by now, and ironed and sold by tomorrow morning.

Only with paupers, I explained. And it is not a right, merely an unofficial concession. I had in fact no idea, but thought this possible.

Well, it's too late now, the stolid harpy complained. Then, though aggressively ignorant, she showed some discretion. There's this book that was in her skirt pocket. No money, though.

I was pretty sure there was some sum of convenience, without which no young lady would venture far from home. The price of a cab or a pot of tea, at least.

You and the chemist, you were doing things to her that Dr. McEvoy didn't order. You had no right. I'll tell him.

This was awkward. What we had done was innocent, even proper. We knew the doctor to be so obsessed with phrenological nonsense that he gravely neglected his duties. Perhaps he always did. The legal administration was heavy on theory but excessively light on practice. Nonetheless, Jeremy as an apothecary and I as a furtive immortal could not afford too deep an inquiry. Knowing the Royal Irish Constabulary as I do, I suspected that if the girl's affairs proved too onerous, they would quite happily pack several box files on to both Jeremy and me. Papers, and the more the better, seemed to satisfy their purpose, as they saw it. Dublin Castle must be a tumulus of chewed foolscap and mouse nests in token of the paper dreams of the Royal Irish Constabulary: the men in dark green with short carbines to keep Ireland obedient, faithful and, dare I say, grateful.

I refuse to leave her like this. Here's a half sovereign. Go to Amiens Street, five minutes away. There are several haberdashers. Montgomery Street, the red lamp area, is adjoining. Bed linen and ladies' requirements must be in plentiful supply. Get some sort of decent undergarment and a Manchester cotton sheet.

And a chignon clip, for the hair, Jeremy added. Since she was quite bald I could not see the purpose but Jeremy, being totally human, had a deeper sense of feeling for human dignity. Down the centuries I have become perhaps overly cerebral.

As the woman donned her shawl I remembered: Here! Where is this book? Let me have it before you go. There's another crown for you if you get back quickly.

She handed over the sodden package instantly and hurried away.

Near the oil lamp, by the girl's foot on the table, I opened the package. It was a notebook, possibly a diary, and it gave her name and place of abode. She was Dympna Conway of Phillipsburg Mews, near Fairview, near my lodgings and even nearer to Jeremy's pharmacy.

The pages were written in lead pencil, which was fortunate, but impossible to read in its present condition. It would have to be carefully dried.

I could hardly give this task to my very inquisitive landlady but Jeremy, a bachelor with a daily lady, could do it neatly and reliably. My first instinct about him as an intelligent, honest and well-read man was proving true.

By the time the female creature returned we had decided on the next stage of the inquiry. To inform Dr. McEvoy of the dead girl's name, etc., and to read her journal, if such it proved to be. As we manhandled her into a shift or camisole, her body had to be bent, which stretched the skin in places, particularly the buttocks. Lying face down, the dead flesh compressed a little under its own weight, as did her breasts when she lay on her back. All fatty parts were affected by gravity and unsupported by muscles to the slightest degree, excluding the breasts, which have none. But when the body was bent as the woman and Jeremy struggled with the garment, I was able to extend the word 'sun' to 'sunflower.' How extraordinary! What possible message could this be? I drew Jeremy's attention to this and we resolved to finish matters here, and adjourn to consider the problem in greater comfort.

With the grudging help of the woman we swathed the girl's body in a cotton sheet, cowled over her shaven pate. But before finishing and pinning it securely to prevent accidental unwrapping, Jeremy carefully gathered her shorn tresses from a shelf and rearranged them somehow on her head with the help of the cheap metal hair clip. It was a touching gesture of respect. Two thick fronds of hair separated on her brow and were swept back behind the cowled folds of sheet.

We packed our bags, gave the female creature a further half crown and emerged onto the cobbles of Store Street, where we whistled twice to summon a clopping empty cab returning from the railway terminus. Jeremy descended at his pharmacy, where his 'boy' was holding the fort, and we arranged to meet later. I returned to my lodgings where my landlady sent out to a nearby pie shop while I settled down to copying any necessary parts of the dead girl's writings. Having done this, I could safely give it to the police, providing that seemed proper. Our police are a monumental and obese collection of semi-educated Irish peasants, and better suited to protecting landlords and applying curfews and the latest Coercion Act that detecting deaths in peculiar circumstances. Over a pot of porter and a veal pie I started to read and take notes.

Dympna was, it appeared, quite an intelligent girl who lived alone in a mews cottage at the rear of a large mansion, now a home for widows of Church of England clergymen. Rows of small brick houses with garden patches and service lanes were being built in the neighborhood, though much of it was still market gardens and small dairy farms.

Neighbors thought it odd that Dympna lived alone and did some work locally as a milliner. But she was friendly, a member of a local church charity, and had at least one relative who visited her every week: her Uncle George, a hearty and bucolic man, who worked as a brewers' taster,

traveling the province of Leinster by steam train and being met at the railway stations by a cab or a high car to take him on to the taverns of the neighborhood, where he would arrive unannounced to sample the condition of the brown and the yellow ale.

If its condition were grievously wrong, sour or flat, the brewery would stop his supply, leaving him to hunt for alternative suppliers, though they too would be suspicious. In practice this never happened. All the townslands of the county would know of his arrival. He was welcomed like royalty: a couple of mouthfuls of porter or ale, spat into the sawdust, and he would settle down to a meal or a snack washed down with whiskey or brandy, depending on whether there was an R in the month. In towns like Bray, Wicklow or Arklow by the sea, he gorged himself on oysters, mussels or scallops. But no doubt his odyssey ensured a higher quality of beer service. He was an honest man. He could afford to be.

Much of this was written on the first few pages of the sodden book. But it was just possible to read it. It was or seemed to be a summary of what had gone before the beginning of the journal, though written in somewhat disjointed observations to herself, not to an outside reader. Statements like, "I know people think it odd, me living in this little house, but what else can I do? The women of the parish are friendly enough. Some of the young men are over-friendly, not that I mind that too much. Last year we all went to Raheny in a brake to pick crabapples and blackberries. It was great fun. Jenny Flanagan's brother kissed me, right in front of everybody. But I didn't care. Jimmy Clancy would have been nicer but Nelly Hanratty has him by a rope. She's a show-off. Thinks she can do what she likes."

Much of the writing, including the curriculum vitae of Uncle George, was written in this style, but the interior of the book was too wet to spread or read. I set it upright, pages splayed slightly, before the fire. It was quite warm weather but a fire was usually set for night, to drive away night vapors and damp. I may be fairly immortal but I do not like being a sick immortal. I found the plague very uncomfortable at a time when any kind of comfort was at a premium, when the burghers of Dublin could not choose between the Fitzgeralds and the King of England (who also laid claim to be the "Lord of Ireland").

While the damp pages were drying and curling I set out the situation as I saw it. A young woman, not quite as slender as I first thought, traveling by tram and steam train to the fishing village of Howth, a hilly peninsula encircling the north of Dublin's circular bay. She visited a cliff-girt island off the coast and disappeared, leaving a leg of her drawers, half a lace handkerchief and some brown wood stain in a bottle. Then she reappears dead, in the North City morgue, to be examined by a crazy and incompetent police surgeon who measured the bumps on her cranium, leaving Jeremy, his occasional assistant, and myself, an interested drop-in, to carry the inquiry further.

For the sake of our safety and general propriety, the police would have to be told. But so much needed to be explained: the writing, the extensive writing on the left buttock. Why? Who did it? It was of course possible that the girl had written it herself on paper with the appropriate ink. This image could then be transferred to a jelly hectograph such as is used in notaries' offices

or large counting houses. Normally, half a dozen prints can be taken from such a device, providing the paper is grease or wax- free and slightly damp.

Now it was just possible that Dympna, for some unfathomable purpose, had seated herself in a sitz bath until her seat was thoroughly soaked. Then, by wiping the chosen buttock with a swab of alcohol, aqua vitae or whatever, to remove all skin secretions. Having done all this, it is possible, though not probable, that she carefully seated one cheek on the hectograph jelly, leaned forward and backward once or twice, and then carefully arose, leaving the hectograph on the chair or whatever. She would then need to leave the lower half of her body uncovered until the imprint dried, probably in the privacy of her own bedroom.

Such a process, if undertaken, would almost certainly be undertaken alone. If in the company of a woman friend it would surely evoke a destructive giggle, and even in the year 1869 it is unthinkable in male company.

Many years, nay centuries ago, when I first came to this country from Wales, there were some strange things done. But clans and families have survived them. It is sometimes alarming to realize the extent of the change. But we all progress, and this is an incredibly progressive century.

The damp pages were tolerably dry, so I set out for the pharmacy to have the crumpled pages smooth-ironed by Jeremy and to continue the inquiry. I wonder whether this obsessive drive is a reflection of my age-long compulsion to tear and eat human flesh at fortunately rare intervals. Who can judge the cross-relationship between mind, soul and body? Neither the theologians, the philosophers nor the doctors of medicine have probed this bond.

Jeremy was waiting for me and led me to a room behind his Medical Hall, next to his workshop and store. I passed by tiers of wooden drawers, each with its chemical content scripted in Latin. Pestles, mortars and pill molds were laid out neatly, sparkling clean. Shelves of bottles carefully labeled stood on the opposite wall. The lighting was bright: a skylight and two fantails of gas over the working surface. The room beyond held a small table, a bookcase and two fairly comfortable farmhouse chairs.

"A dish of tea first, to lubricate the mind?"

I nodded assent and Jeremy poured with the authority of a chatelaine or a monitoring grandmother. A plate of sliced crumpets spread with bramble jelly lay between us. This pleased me. The tea was aromatic Darjeeling and the conserve was jelly, not jam. Seedy fruits are best conserved as jellies rather than jams.

As we took our comfort Jeremy pointed to his workshop.

"I have the ironing stones heating in my curing oven. So whenever you are ready. And there's something else that may help."

I washed down the last piece of crumpet and Jeremy collected the tea things and laid down a folded strip of blanket on the table. He went next door and came back with a smoothening iron, fully charged with two hot stones. Rather expertly, he spat on the surface and when it hissed violently left it on a piece of slate to cool a little while he opened the book and laid one page on the blanket.

The smoothening of the single page only took a few seconds and we managed a dozen or more before the smoothening iron required two new hot stones. These were replaced in a few moments and the task was soon completed.

□Now I want to show you something that will save us many weary hours.□

I followed Jeremy into the chemical workshop.

□This□□ he gestured to a structure that held a wooden photographic camera, lens downwards to a small table on which a document could be laid. □This□□ he pointed to a large circular mirror glass, □will focus the light of the evening sun through the glass □coach roof□ and condense it onto the pages of the notebook.□

He put it on the rostrum and adjusted the mirror. Even without the direct sunlight the luminosity was vastly increased.

□Very soon now,□ said Jeremy as he opened a box of plate carriers, fully loaded.

□How did you get so many?□ I asked in surprise.

□Like to be well prepared. Prepare them myself in the winter months. Printing cartons as well.□

□Are you a professional photographer as well as an apothecary?□ I inquired, slightly puzzled.

□Just a little scientific recording. For my own information.□ He spoke a little shortly, so I didn□t bother to press the point.

The photographic recording of the diaries proceeded smoothly as soon as the evening light hit the window.

□The pencil marks are very pale, but I can print them as black as I like,□ he told me. This pleased me for two reasons. It would assist me to read more of the journals, and the frail calligraphy of the original would deter or diminish the police interest in the case.

I cannot think why but there lies a deep dislike of the police in the heart of most citizens. They sing □The Peeler and the Goat□ or □All those fat-arsed big police/ Monumentally obese/ Is it never going to cease?/ says the Shan Van Vocht.□ Well, the Shan Van, the poor old woman, may say it, but so do the highly irreverent children of Dublin. Irish-Anglo-Norman I may be, but I distrust all Peelers.

The evening sun rays had sunk to a more acute angle and no longer limelit the pages of the diary via the convex mirror, but Jeremy had finished his exposures and was in and out of a heavily curtained cupboard, developing his plates. The first couple had emerged, washed and fixed, and seemed clearer than the originals, but in negative of course. This hardly mattered since they could be read easily against a sheet of frosted glass, behind which stood a colza lamp with a well-polished reflector. Jeremy had indeed substituted the metal reflector with a shaving mirror. The few sheets that might prove difficult could be printed onto a positive paper to whatever size (within reason) that would aid interpretation.

This was done with the help of a magic lantern which was often used in the local church hall, evangelical, of course. The Roman Catholic majority church was busy sinking the foundations of its empire, with the help of the Conservative or Liberal government in Westminster. The Low Church Protestants favored by Huguenot descendants like Jeremy throve on fee-raising entertainments of converted Berbers or Tuaregs or hand-tinted slides of biblical interest.

A muffled lowing of cows from the back lane reminded me that the cows were being driven back from evening milking to their small pastures and byres beyond the half-built suburban houses. A few customers entered the shop, sounding its doorbell automatically, but Jeremy, busy as he was, dealt with them rapidly. He had drawers packed with this favorite nostrums already made up in neat packages or pill boxes, carefully labeled Headaches, Flux, Purges, Toothache, Ladies Delay pills and so forth. He would also administer a few drops of laudanum in sweet rhubarb wine. This was a great favorite, though the patients invariably died later of some terrible wasting ailment. Still, Jeremy s nostrums gave some comfort and many a night of sleep.

Before taking the diary to the police, I decided to acquaint Jeremy with my summary of the full story, excluding my own initial motives, of course. Very few have been privy to them down the years. He was, in his quiet way, a capital colleague in an extra-legal, though not illegal inquiry such as this. Despite his fifty odd years he had far more resources than me. After reading him my summary I even advanced my hectograph theory in full, expecting him to share the ingenious joke. To my surprise he accepted it as one of several equal possibilities. He also had a suggestion of his own. He claimed it could have been etched photographically and offered to show me an example.

Although giving no credence to his thought, I expressed a curiosity to see such an example. He went to another cupboard off his workroom and rummaged through what sounded like files, and came back with two positive prints.

I coated these papers myself. I don t trust the commercial laboratories. But the point is that I have adapted a silver solution that takes readily to human skin, providing its surface is swabbed with alcohol first. Look at this.

He thrust a half plate print before me. It showed the naked back of a young man, lying on a table. His head was turned sideways: could he be dead? On his back was his name, place of

discovery and two dates.

A young fisherman from Howth. I helped in his recovery. Didn't trust the police or the municipal idiots to get things right. While he was lying all day in the Coulters' coach house I did this. Everyone thought it was a good idea, but no one adopted the practice, I need hardly say. The dates are the probable time of drowning and the time of recovery. This gives useful information about tides, currents and winds. Very useful data for a fishing community, don't you think?'

I swallowed my surprise but agreed wholeheartedly.

'Now look at this one. A living subject, in a manner of speaking.'

A youngish woman with a fine figure: wide hips, narrow waist and generous thighs appeared to hover above a neatly tended grave. Her eyes were open and she looked straight at the beholder. But the truly astonishing thing is that she was entirely naked, had two large feathered wings sprouting and spread behind her shoulders and seemed to be about a foot above the ground. Across the generous tops of her thighs, in a very decorated script with linear ornament, were the words 'Vitam Aeternam.' On each knee was a Maltese cross within a circle.

Now I have seen many strange things, but this, as the country boys from the central plain would say, 'Beats Banagher.'

'What's this?' I spluttered. 'The rear view of a naked young man, a very dead one, and the living and charming ghost of a very dead woman. I suppose the lady is meant to be the occupant of the grave.'

'In a manner of speaking, Mr. Fitzlupus. The grave is real. The young woman is real and is one of the dark angels of Montgomery Street, the red light district down the tramtrack. Oh, this was a few years ago, but after the Fenian Rising at Tallaght and Greenhills. Before the tramway rails. Those damned omnibuses. Expensive, dangerous and quite unreliable.'

'But the girl's face.'

'From a photograph supplied by the grieving husband, grafted onto the body of Imelda, who at that time was only a kitchen maid in the brothel. It was an expensive but splendid memorial to a young wife carried off by the fever, for her widower. He told me he gazed at it nightly as he lay in his cold bed. Very touching.'

'No doubt, no doubt,' I muttered. 'People yearn for such things.'

Jeremy shook his head. 'People tell me the strangest things when I recommend a certain kind of pill or suppository to them.'

I'm sure they do' was all I could say.

I must confess to some surprise at the resurrection photograph. After so long a time on earth, very little shocks me, but the older one becomes the more conservative they say. I think not. Certainly not universally. But as years and generations are surpassed, the memory of old certainties secretes a black pearl of bigotry to cushion the irritable mind. It is no nacreous jewel of the soul but a poisoned pearl.

As I was wrapping the diary in brown paper I asked him. 'Are there many people who cling to memories of life like that young widower?'

'Dear me, yes. He was quite normal. This is a century of science and industry, but also an epoch of splendid tombs and mausoleums. Storied urns and animated busts abound a short walk from here, along the banks of the river Tolka. In other countries they have built great cities of the dead where memories decay slowly. But decay they do. Take my word.'

A bit overwhelmed by this, I muttered, 'Ah yes, indeed. Poor Thomas Gray would have no churchyard to write his Elegy now.'

'Oh, there are still ten thousand humble places. By the ruined church of Kilbarrack, a few miles away, where the sea birds soar and scream and the sea geese call mournfully.'

'Do you get many requests like the resurrected lady?' I asked.

'Oh lots. Some I refuse but I often photograph the 'laying out' of someone: a parent or a spouse. A long exposure in a dark room with lighted candles. Death masks, often. They pay well and I got used to it. The dead are gentle in their last smile. I have been asked to cast a full body, oh, several times. But I did so only once, and for two reasons. It has to be done in large sections, carefully keyed to fit after removal. It is hard heavy work and, for some reason, I don't like seeking an assistant. Everyone from the viceroy down to the coal porter would soon know all about it. And something else. After the first time I began to wonder about the motives of my clients. When I undertook to do a cast for another widower, if such he was, I dressed the body in a long shift, with the help of the laying-out lady. Always formidable creatures. I then drenched the garment and the body in sweet oil to form a barrier to the plaster. Very tastefully too. In the Greek style of delicate swirling folds and pleats. Very difficult on a prone figure since such folds are formed by gravity, and a bit of Greek fancy as well. Greek girls on vases or metopes always seem to wear wet clinging nightdresses. But, just as I stood back in triumph, the client called to see how it was going.

' 'Sir, I wish none of this. My dear one must be as pure and naked as an angel of Paradise.'

'Taken aback and slightly hurt, I remonstrated. 'I can cover the hair with a cap and build up a plaster mass afterwards, as in some death masks.' But there is hair elsewhere on the body. It would mesh in the plaster.'

 Then, sir, you must shave it, he directed and, see, he reached into his pocket and produced a brown wig of lustrous human hair. You can glue this to the head of your cast, and a few ringlets will suffice for the groin.

As I began to remonstrate he threw something onto the table: a pair of carefully matched glass eyes. Can these be inserted and the eyelids remodeled? The cost is of no importance, but I must have a perfect effigy to dress in whatever clothing I desire. I started to splutter. But sir . . .

 That is quite enough. No evasions. Do you know who I am? he said.

I had indeed his name and that of his dead wife, with all the proper documents, left by the funeral undertaker. He handed me a card in gilt script, giving the name of one of the most illustrious Anglo-Norman families in Ireland, still secure in their estates like the vicar of Bray, despite Penal Laws and confiscations.

I was struck dumb by much of this strange work which had to be done in the early afternoons, when housewives are resting, or at night when photographic records are difficult and protracted. Furthermore, I doubted the morality of this cult of death, for such it certainly seemed to be. A photographic image or a death mask could serve for post-funerary purposes. Tombstones and carvings, or secret drawers in a private chest of sad memories. I know the Montgomery Street area of brothels and have executed many tasteful Etudes Academiques of the residents to decorate the walls and screens of the waiting rooms. These are artistic, though some of the clients may savor them more carnally. When Maisie Madigan from Athlone changes her name to Yolande and poses, dimples and all, with a Greek water jug on her head it may stretch credulity a bit but the artistic intention cannot be doubted. It is common knowledge that there is a special chamber, draped in black, where a Cape Coloured girl called Elsie lies in a coffin, but her services are flesh and blood. I think that people like my resurrection wife or the cast of a young woman with a wig and glass eyes is for visual stimulation only. It harms nobody. It seems a lonely pleasure, but it offends my taste as a scientist and a photographic artist. I intend to leave my collection of plates to Trinity College Library where they can be appreciated in a more enlightened age, when machines can carry man in aerial flight and fast ships can cross the Atlantic Ocean in five days. Mark my word, that s how it will be in a hundred years.

This unexpected outpouring and philosophizing left me with little to say. We must discuss these and more urgent matters further. Meanwhile I will walk to the police barracks and deliver the diary. I think I will say it is from you, since you are one of the crazy doctor s most frequent assistants. Good evening, sir. I will see you very soon.

With that, I quitted the premises of this remarkable apothecary and made my way in the late sunset toward the police barracks, reflecting as I strode purposefully on my luck in encountering Jeremy. Yet those strange photographs and his ingenuous description of some of his strange encounters made me realize the need for my own greater discretion.

Too long a submersion in the rising middle class of this city and a period of prosperous merchandising before that and other pursuits had grafted onto my primordial soul a moral code that I fully accepted and approved of; despite my violent actions to the contrary from time to time.

The sergeant was civil and welcoming. "Is it about a horse biting you?" he inquired as I entered.

"No, it is not."

"Some say the starving hackney animals are after the padding in gentlemen's suits. Like the shoulders."

"Certainly not," I snapped, a bit startled by his odd solicitude. "I assisted the doctor in a routine post-mortem this morning and he left before Mr. Jeremy and I found this diary in the clothing. It identifies the dead person by name and dwelling."

"That is a matter of great convenience," the sergeant remarked ponderously, but as he thumbed his way through the pale silver grey scribbles on the ironed pages I realized that he would not pursue the girl's history very far. "Ah, here we are. Name and address. Now let's." He thumbed his way rapidly to the last writings. "Mmmm…Spoke to Julia on leaving the sewing group. Promise to take tea on Monday, 3.40. Must bring Ladies Own Journal on tight lacing and flushes. Hope she will not take offence." Nothing much here, is there sir? None of us ever know the fate the next hour might bring."

"Indeed, no."

"Oh, that's a certain fact that no one can avoid." The sergeant flipped the diary with a mournful shake of his head. "Did Mr. Jeremy examine this, sir?"

"Oh he did, sergeant. Very thoroughly."

"Oh! Good, sir. Then he will surely direct me to any particular relevance."

"I don't doubt that he will, sergeant. A very good night to you." The amiable disinterest of the police in the identity of the dead woman, the search for the next of kin and the burial: all this was unresolved. "Uncle George" had not been informed, nor her church sewing circle. Even her exact age was unknown, beyond a reasonable conjecture of youthful womanhood. Was she a virgin or not? Dr. McEvoy's phrenological bumps would hardly help in these very important lines of inquiry. The Irish, like most peoples who derive their livelihood from the land, are a disputative and legally-inclined lot, but criminal law administration is almost entirely confined to landlords, land agents and tenants or the exact observation of the successive Coercion Laws that free expression of clergy, werewolves and laity alike. The popular song "The Peeler and the Goat" was barely satirical. Many a goat or ass or a heifer was impounded with heavy fines for wandering abroad after curfewed darkness.

With these thoughts on my troubled mind I wandered far amongst the green lanes and market farms from Clontarf, where King Brian Boru was hewn to death in A.D. 1014, to Swords, where the tall Round Tower bore witness to more turbulent and yet more peaceful days. That is if one is disposed to feel sentimental about round towers and ruined monasteries. But it is a long time since Malachi wore the collar of gold/ That he won from the proud invader, and I felt my change coming on.

Straw Dogs by John Gray

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

John Gray has a bone to pick. His latest book, Straw Dogs, takes aim at a host of targets in what appears to be a wholesale deconstruction of human thought. Religion, humanism, philosophy, belief in progress (indeed, belief in anything), industrialization, even civilization itself has, according to Gray, kept us from realizing our true nature: that we are just one more species of animal. And since "other animals do not need a purpose in life . . . can we not think of the aim of life as being simply to see?"

In two hundred pages of text, Gray never explains what this means. Instead, the reader is treated to an array of disconnected quotations from Aristotle to Zarathustra, none of which serve to illustrate a coherent argument. *Straw Dogs* does contain moments where important topics such as the environment and the idea of progress, the future of genetic engineering and its effect on humanity, and the underlying philosophies of western and eastern religions are raised. Yet Gray merely dabbles on the surface of these issues (each of which would require a separate volume to explore), content merely to mention their existence. The end result is an incoherent book which goes nowhere and says very little. Gray's final message—that humanity's purpose in life should be "simply to see," yet the human animal "cannot do with out a purpose," is at best anti-climatic and at worst a failure to tie together its preceding chapters.

The book is a string of aphorisms, each varying wildly in both length and subject matter. No doubt Gray was influenced by such works as Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human* and Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, but *Straw Dogs* lacks both the depth and coherence that characterize those two works. What's more, his aphoristic format seems forced. Gray states in his acknowledgments that though his thoughts are presented in "fragments," they are not unsystematic. He also writes that the aphorisms may either be read in sequence or "dipped into at will." Whatever his intentions, the overall effect of his schema is a nearly random flitting from topic to topic, his thoughts never alighting long enough to explore any one of them in useful detail.

Gray's book contains many inconsistencies and contradictions. Among the most egregious is his treatment of science. On the one hand, Gray states that "the origins of science are not in rational inquiry but in faith, magic and trickery," while on the other hand he equates science with technology, from which, according to Gray, its power flows. While he does not go so far as to declare that technology is trickery or magic, the implication is clear. Furthermore, his stance that the origins of science lie in magic and trickery while its success lies in superior rhetoric betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the history and philosophy of science. It is rather surprising that a professor of European Thought at the London School of Economics would so thoroughly neglect both Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes.

Another inconsistency lies in Gray's extensive usage of quotations from both western and eastern philosophy to buttress his argument that philosophy is so much bunk obscuring the truth about humanity. In addition, he continually references Darwin (without once explaining the actual theory of evolution) and recent advances in genetic research to illustrate his point that humans are merely animals and should consider themselves as such, while at the same time relentlessly decrying science and its origins. Apparently, Gray believes that neither Darwin's theory of evolution nor genetic research fall under the rubric of science, or for that matter, philosophy as he understands it.

All in all, *Straw Dogs* is a confusing book with no useful underlying message. While Gray does at times raise some interesting and controversial topics, his treatment of them is too brief and shallow to justify a serious perusal of the work. No doubt Gray intended *Straw Dogs* to be a work of popular philosophy and not an academic offering. It is a shame that he thinks the former must be characterized by inconsistency, contradiction, and superficiality.

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The Specter of Democracy

By | 2003: Vol. 2, No. 3

Dick Howard's *The Specter of Democracy* is composed primarily of recent essays revised for this volume. They express ideas that he has been developing for about three decades. Cutting a broad swath, he critically explores the relations between theory, history, and politics. The essays reflect his intellectual journey—his early engagements with Marx, the Frankfurt School, and, especially, Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis, his later works on politics, political judgment, and French and American political history, and his current ideas about Marx and political theory after communism. Howard's post-Marxist theoretical argument provides a connective thread in the loosely integrated essays. He states that re-engaging Marx is timely in a "post-1989 world that wants to replace political choice by submission to the 'natural necessity' of the market."[1] He contends that Marx's effort to conjure up proletarian revolutionary subjectivity from technical progress and economic crisis has a similar "antipolitical" thrust. Howard (p. 10) holds that "Marx was essentially a philosopher," but that his attempt to radically historicize Hegelianism, translating it into a materialist theory of historical rationality and social progress, subordinated his philosophical critique of alienation to a deterministic "sociology."2 According to Howard, Marx's practice of "philosophy by other means"obscured the normative nature of his critique, conflated the realm of freedom with necessity, and blinded him to the "*democratic political implications of his own analysis*" (emphasis in the original). Howard attempts to execute a complicated theoretical maneuver; he criticizes Marx's sociological reduction of politics in order to recover the "philosophical Marx" and, then, ultimately go beyond him "to open the path to politics" and democracy that he sees to be absent in Marx (p. xiii).

Howard acknowledges considerable debt to Lefort and Castoriadis, devoting several chapters to their ideas and employing them throughout the book. Increasingly skeptical about communism after the suppressed 1956 Hungarian revolt, they and others in the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* circle declared the autonomy of politics from economic determination, engaged new forms of protest that went beyond class, and brought to the foreground communist repression, which generally had been ignored by the French left. As Howard explains, Lefort and Castoriadis saw Hegelian historicism to be a root of Marx's reductive claim that progressive development of the mode of production leads inevitably to emancipation. Rather than an advance over Hegelian idealism, they argued, his materialism grants pseudohistorical necessity to contingent historical processes. Stressing an affinity for totalitarianism, they held that Marx's historicism has been deployed by communist regimes and parties to justify the suppression of political opposition. Howard shares their view that Marxism neutralizes its own democratic political potentiality and that realization of it requires a radical break with historicism and a new openness to history.

Howard also agrees with Lefort's definition of the political as the "symbolic institution of

society," or creation and reproduction of the normative bases of societal institutions. Lefort held that pre-existing hierarchical societies limited these symbolic practices to élites, who fashioned "external or transcendent" religious and metaphysical legitimations to justify their dominance. As Howard explains, he argued that democracy seeks "unity from within" society and expects its "members to take responsibility for their own individuality." Lefort held that democracy arose when the ancien régime collapsed and citizens asserted the "right to have rights," or the right to demand from the state recognition of their individual rights. He portrayed democracy as a plural "public space" where diverse citizens and groups, empowered by their rights, engage in open-ended, historically-variable deliberations. In his view, the consequent "radical indeterminacy" rules out unified publics and determination by general social conditions. However, Lefort contended that these reductionist ideas are products of modern ideologies, which arise to ease uncertainty and mask contingency. For example, liberalism's claims about a rational self-interested subject and the inevitable operations of "market forces" provide a sense a certainty about liberal society's foundations that discourage consideration of political alternatives. Lefort believed that an independent, open civil society is the best bulwark against the ideological reflex's antipolitics. Following Lefort, Howard holds that Marx's sociological reduction and vision of materially-driven proletarian unity deny politics' discursive, contingent nature and that these historicist ideas, combined with Marx's highly negative view of civil society and liberal rights, constitutes a proto-totalitarian ideology (pp. 77-80, 116-18,166, 209-10, 327, note 10).

Howard states that Castoriadis acknowledged that "Marx bet on history and lost" (i.e., his hopes about the emancipatory proletariat failed). Howard implies, however, that Castoriadis still carried on the Marxist project to transcend Hegelianism with the understanding that it required a much more radical break than Marx was willing to make. Howard shares Castoriadis's goal of moving beyond historicist teleology to a position recognizing history's uniqueness, autonomy, and contingency (pp. 87-88). By contrast, Howard argues, the Frankfurt School failed to make this decisive post-Marxist, post-Hegelian move and, when their revolutionary hopes crashed, they sought aesthetic transcendence and rejected "everyday politics" (pp.39-41). Howard speculates that their deeply pessimistic vision of consumer capitalism's seamlessly integrated, depoliticized, "one-dimensional" culture helped inspire later postmodernist claims about the end of modernity and exhaustion of politics. In his view, this "antipolitics" or "politics of theory" manifest constricted political vision, rather than politics' actual demise. Howard explains his youthful affiliation with *Telos*, stressing the initial trouble that he had getting that formerly left journal, which was then still operating in Marx's tracks, to take up Lefort and Castoriadis. He did not mention, however, that the editor and his inner circle, at that time, posed an extreme version of the one-dimensionality thesis portraying a near total closure of historical contradictions and of immanent possibilities for progressive change. This view not only anticipated pessimistic forms of postmodernism, but the *Telos* inner circle's consequent search for organic community led them to take up Carl Schmitt in the 1980s and, after, to make an anti-liberal, neopopulist turn.

Howard devotes considerable attention to historical comparison of French and American political cultures. He holds that the framers of the French republican regime had to pose a new

conception of unity to replace the old monarchy's lost integration. Faced with the problem of fragmentation, Howard contends, they envisioned a republican state reviving political unity. He argues that the framers of the new French regime stressed inclusion at the national level, calling for universal citizenship and state action to insure social and political rights and to secure social equality. By contrast, he explains, engaging a setting that lacked the ancien régime's cultural and political unity, American framers forged a vision of a self-managed democracy that is composed of diverse communities and individuals and that secures inclusion through free association and minimal reliance on state power. He holds that adoption of judicial autonomy and competitive political parties made clear that rights had to be won and defended politically. Howard embraces American "republican democracy," which he sees to be inherently pluralist, open, and dynamic, while he implies that the state-centered French "democratic republic" is prone to the sociological reduction and proto-totalitarian singularity that he says inheres in Marxism. Still, he argues that American democracy may also express antipolitical tendencies; e.g., its emphasis on individual rights can degenerate into a "procedural republic" manifesting "right over good," legal formality, and social fragmentation. In his view, the republican idea in France as well as in the United States is "political" rather than "socio-economic" and, thus, can be employed critically against the sociological reduction and collective subjects (pp. 174, 184). Howard's historical accounts of French and American republicanism are too complex to adequately summarize here. However, their unifying thread is emphatic critique of the reduction of discursively-mediated political action to general sociological contexts and fictive collective subjects, which he implies deprive politics of their historical particularity and complex, dynamic, plural, dispersed agency.

Howard speaks briefly about a totalizing "politics of will" that posits— independent of political action—a "right thing to be done" and a "unified actor" to do it and about an opposed "politics of judgement" that reflects critically on the consequences of political action and acts prudently. Stressing the need to take "responsibility" for political decision, which the politics of will abjures, Howard suggests that the politics of judgement suffuse republican democracy and his own analyses (pp. 18-22, 30, 78, 74, 107, 194-96). He also mentions in passing Max Weber's related "ethics of conviction" and "ethics of responsibility" (p. 236). These concepts were part of Weber's broader post-traditional argument about political responsibility, which rejected ideas of historical necessity and collective subjects and the consequent aversion of political decision. Moreover, Weber warned that fanatical forms of conviction suspend ethical reflection as well as political prudence, justifying extreme control, violence, and repression and giving rise to the total state. Addressing Weber might have prompted Howard to clarify his concepts of politics of will and politics of judgment, which are central to his argument, but are left unelaborated. John Dewey's radical democratic theory also seems to converge at key points with Howard's project. Dewey stressed democracy's uncertain, plural, discursive, historically particular, incomplete, experimental nature. He aimed to fashion a radically historicist, antifoundationalist democratic alternative to Hegelian historicism that breaks as fundamentally from modern ideas of historical necessity as it does from traditional metaphysics, religion, and political philosophy. Also, Dewey posed his mature social theory contra totalitarianism—Fascism and Stalinism. Engaging Dewey critically also might have sharpened Howard's argument. However, his failure to address these particular thinkers is not

problematic per se. Rather, the problem is that he does not situate adequately his theory relative to related political theories and social theories. Developing this theoretical context would have helped Howard bring forward more clearly and completely his overall position on democracy and its connections to current historical and political contexts.

Howard's unqualified claims about the "autonomy" and "radical indeterminacy" of politics and negative comments about "the flat terrain of sociology" and the "mere sociologist" (pp. 77, 81) draw an overly sharp boundary between politics and its "sociological" contexts. Exaggerating the threat of sociological reduction, he largely ignores the interdependence between these *relatively* autonomous spheres. Moreover, he does not distinguish the pseudo-sociology employed in bogus historicist arguments from genuine sociological inquiry about conditions that influence the direction and content of politics. He recognizes passingly that sociological analysis may have a limited role in normative critique, but he does not explain that role and, being very wary of the "totalitarian temptation," he asserts that such analysis easily turns reductive (p. 134). He also implies that a sociological moment in normative critique would be positivist, suggesting the kind of disembodied eye, oblivious to normative conditioning of social inquiry, that thinkers like Weber and Dewey dismissed early last century. By contrast, Howard does not acknowledge that philosophy, which he strongly privileges in political critique, may need a sociological moment to avert the very tendency "to fly above reality" that he attributes to positivism. Strong claims about autonomy may inhere in efforts to make radical breaks from powerful constraints, but these moves still manifest the sociological context. Lefort's and Castoriadis's emphatic claims about autonomy and indeterminacy make sense in light of their effort to break politically, intellectually, and even personally from post-World War II communism and from its patently constrained politics and sterile deterministic theories. However, this context has faded long ago. Today, politically ambiguous Schmitteans and populists as well as "New Right" proto-fascists make similar strong claims about the autonomy of politics and attack sociological reduction in their critiques of globalization and neoliberalism. Howard surely opposes such positions, but the context of his own work is not clear and he does not explain its political relevance.

Howard recognizes the problem. He says that he does "not want to leave the impression that the theoretical arguments presented here have no immediate political implications," and he invites readers to his website to sample some of his recent "directly political" commentaries, which he says illustrate his "understanding of democracy as radical." I accepted his invitation, but his many well-reasoned points about the American political climate in the wake of 9/11 do not clarify the political direction of his overall argument and, especially, why it should be construed to be an extension of Marx or to be radically democratic. Howard analyzes how historicism and sociological reduction contribute to de-politicization and de-democratization, but he explains neither the current relevance of his strong claims about autonomy nor his overall *substantive* vision of democracy. Like Dewey, he stresses an affinity between historicism and democracy, but, by contrast to Dewey, he does not offer tools for a critique of "really existing" democracy—e.g., to evaluate whether the United States has "strong" or "weak" republican democracy and to suggest how it might be made "stronger" and more just. This is an ironic problem for a thinker who endorses political critique and democracy so

enthusiastically.

The issue of historicity and sociology brings us back to Marx. Howard's critique of historical necessity addresses a deeply problematic thread in Marx's work. However, he implies that determinism rules Marx's analysis of capitalism. Howard does not acknowledge the side of Marx's work that stresses sociological inquiry into the specific conditions of particular situations (i.e., recognizing the contingent nature of the social) and that employs concepts as heuristic devices (simplifying a contingent empirical world for analytical purposes). Even young Marx countered his Hegelian side with points about the need to study "definite individuals" sharing historically-specific social and political relations. However, the materialist transparency promised at the end of the *Manifesto's* famous passage about "all that is solid melts into air" is replaced, in his mature work, by a warning that the "appearance of simplicity vanishes." In *Capital*, Marx spoke of an "economistic law of motion" operating with "iron necessity" and leading "inevitably" to proletarian emancipation. However, he also held that proliferation of "middle and intermediate strata," in England, "obliterate lines of demarcation everywhere." He understood that advanced capitalism's complex class relations and interventionist state posed problems for his political hopes and that his social theory had to be brought to bear on increasingly diverse types of capitalism. Late in life, Marx even doubted that full capitalist modernization would extend beyond western Europe. His sociological uncertainty appears in other forms. For example, he conditioned his core materialist idea that the pumping out of surplus product from direct producers is "the hidden basis of the entire social structure" with the qualification that the process has "infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances." Similar qualifications about empirical variability appear in other parts of *Capital*, implying that Marx saw his theory as a heuristic model as well as the mirror of the Telos of History. The point is that Marx expressed two types of "historical" narratives—sociological historicism and Hegelian historicism. Howard criticizes sharply Marx's historicism, but his position should be evaluated in the broader light of the tensions between and entwinement of his determinism and his sociology.

Engels admitted after Marx's death that he and Marx had exaggerated the "economic side," but he also declared famously that their materialist method claimed nothing more than: "the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production of and reproduction of real life." Holding that "all history must be studied afresh," Engels insisted that they created "a guide to study, not a lever after the manner of the Hegelian."[3] Engels's afterthought understates the determinist thread in Marx's and his materialism, but it stresses correctly the importance of their sociological historicism. The master narrative of their texts is still a matter of debate. However, Howard's privileging of the "philosophical Marx" and reducing of his sociological side to Hegelianism understates the significance of his sociology. The enduring value of Marx's work derives as much from his sociology as from his normative ideas. His analysis of capitalism poses still compelling questions about its highly problematic relationship with democracy. His view that socio-economic matters condition fundamentally the shape, quality, and possibility of democracy and, thus, need to be taken account of in theory and practice does not by itself constitute a sociological reduction of politics. By contrast,

unqualified emphasis on the autonomy of politics does not favor inquiry into the impacts of wealth and power on democracy, which are often concealed or intentionally suppressed. Addressing the impacts of expanded corporate power and increased economic inequality, under neoliberal globalization, is *essential* to today's debates over the prospects for democracy and does not preclude the relative autonomy of politics or deny other forms exclusion. A theory of radical democracy must bring to the foreground the unequal and unjust distribution of the material and cultural means of participation. Marx's impassioned emphasis on this matter gives him more than nine lives and is the reason that his specter still hangs over us today. In this light, Howard's emphasis on the importance of Marx's normative side makes sense. But Marx's vision of capitalist inequality is the main point of conjuncture between his philosophy and sociology—his sociology provides his normative vision of justice specificity and historicity. That Howard is silent about the relation of capitalism and democracy raises questions about the methodological adequacy as well as the historicity of his claims about the autonomy of politics and his dim view of the sociological moment of criticism.

Arguably Marx founded the tradition of modern "social theory." Social theorists frame normative arguments, but their work is distinguished from earlier types of normative theory by a strong sociological moment. Although the borders are fluid, social theory's normative thrust distinguishes it from more narrowly-focused, empirically-oriented "sociological theory" and social science. By contrast to religion and metaphysics the legitimacy of social theory depends on the discursively-mediated, empirical-historical validity of its "sociological" claims as well as the consistency, persuasiveness, and emotional/aesthetic force of its normative facets. Social theory's project of providing an "historical" alternative to absolutist normative argument is neither complete nor transparent. First-generation social theorists, like Marx, often conflated History with history and tried to justify their practice as "science," obscuring its normative thrust. Howard rightly criticizes this reduction, which is still a problem today. However, as in Marx's case, social theorists' historicist and scientistic claims have often appeared alongside, in the same texts, valid types of sociological and normative argument. Today, after multiple waves of critiques of scientism, theorists sometimes deny or understate social theory's empirical-historical side and, thus, lean back toward absolutism or simply fail to justify their normative practices at all. Howard does not make this error, but he suggests a rather narrowly construed conception of political theory that understates the role of sociological contexts in conditioning political action and political thought. The interdependence of the sociological and political moments call for a broader view of theory that takes fuller account of the fact that democracy is a "social thing."

That confusion still reigns over the nature of social theory and its boundaries with empirical-historical work has been easy to see in later 20th century polemics over postmodernism and other interdisciplinary theories. Opposing sides in these disputes have often pitted science and social theory against each other. By contrast, these practices, regardless of their independent logics, are culturally entwined; social theory provides a post-traditional language to debate the normative directions of science and policy and social science provides the historical knowledge for social theory arguments, in which normative justification depends largely on claims about the socio-cultural and political consequences of the proposed policy regimes. Howard's critique

of historicism contributes to the project of social theory. His points about the sociological reduction eroding political responsibility and sapping democratic vitality likely has as much cultural significance after communism, as they did when Lefort and Castoriadis posed their ideas. Recall Howard's passing comment that his critique of Marxist antipolitics is relevant to neoliberalism; its collective subject, the rational economizer, and claims about the inevitable impacts of "market forces" suggest an abdication of political decision parallel to that generated by Marxist certainty about the emancipatory proletariat and communism. Hopefully, Howard will follow up on this provocative point, bringing to bear his broader argument about the political on neoliberalism, which will likely make his position clearer and perhaps answer the concerns that I have raised.

Notes

1 Dick Howard, *The Specter of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 287. Further page references to this work are in parentheses in the text of this essay.

2 "Sociology" is used here to refer to social science, rather than to the explicit discipline of sociology. Howard identifies Marx's "economic" theory as "sociological." Marx's historical materialism focuses on the *social* relationships by which ruling or dominant classes extract surplus from direct producers. His "labor theory of value" addresses the capitalist version of this social relationship.

3 Frederick Engels, "Engels to Conrad Schmidt" and "Engels to Joseph Bloch" (Letters written in 1890), pp.395-400 in *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, edited by Lewis S. Feuer (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1959).

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